

MOVEMENT AND STILLNESS: MINDFULNESS AND THE ART OF INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

Mindfulness researchers have predominantly used quantitative methods. Post positivist researchers have developed operational definitions and measures of mindfulness to understand and capture what mindfulness is. However, the act of operationalizing and measuring mindfulness ignores the works of some teachers/students of mindfulness that describe mindfulness as the immeasurable or indefinable. This is not to say that we cannot use descriptions to spark learning into mindfulness, only to understand that the description is not the described when discussing mindfulness, as Krishnamurti has highlighted. The common tools utilized by mindfulness teachers to help spark students' learning into mindfulness are such things as yoga, questions, stories, and breath awareness.

Post positivist researchers, and mindfulness teachers and their students, are exploring the question: "What is mindfulness?" with different methods. To be able to utilize story to spark learning into mindfulness/represent the results of this study, I have completed a qualitative study exploring the question: How do the participants in this study's mindfulness program inquire?

Eight middle-aged women Hatha yoga students consented to participate in this study's six-and-half week mindfulness program. The program had experiential, discussion/story, and movement based learning. As the mindfulness teacher, I continuously posed questions to and discussed questions with the students, to help spark learning into mindfulness. The women, myself, and the works of mindfulness authors highlighted that mindful inquiry was about the oneness of learning, listening, and compassion; as well as, the importance of stories, friendship, and trust. These themes were communicated through the fictional story.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

What is mindfulness? I am often asked this question when I tell people that my master's thesis topic is mindfulness, and since I would like to help people understand what mindfulness is - I spurt out a few descriptions or definitions. But when I hear these sentences and see the question marks in my questioners' eyes, I do not think these sentences provide much insight into mindfulness.

For me, stories provide some insight into mindfulness. The first story I thought of was about my dog, Missy... or as I liked to call her, Boober. I thought of my dog first because I think she has shared the most insight into mindfulness with me. I am not saying that she has told me what mindfulness is; rather, the time I have spent with Boober has evoked questions and insights into mindfulness. When I think of Boober I think of this amazing excitement. She was always so excited to see her "family", whether it was each moment or each day. Boober was not only excited to see her family; she was also excited about daily activities. When I would ask her if she wanted to go for a walk she would get so excited. Boober would spin around, bark, and stand by the door wagging her tail. Usually her tail would make these thumping sounds because she was beating it so hard against the door. As soon as we left the house she had to explore everything. Boober had to taste the snow, smell the grass, and greet everyone. If you left Boober to guide the walk, you would spend an hour at each pole or smell she found interesting. My friend, Malvina, made that "mistake" one day! So, sometimes (well a lot of the time) I would have to tug on the

leash so that our walk would not turn into a half-day exploration. Boober always had an ongoing curiosity to explore, no matter if we had walked the same walk a thousand times.

When my dog died in October of 2004, she inspired a poem.

How would you live your life if it was only 16 years long?

Would you enjoy every moment?

Be excited every time you see the people you love?

Enjoy every treat?

Take long naps in whatever part of the day?

Take long walks when you can?

"Stop to smell the roses"?

Investigate everything?

Bark in the air?

....How do you live your life?

For me, Boober evoked the question of - where does this excitement for life come from? Does this excitement arise from a mind that sees every experience as a new experience to be discovered and explored, or from a mind that sees everything through the lenses of experience? So really, the question Boober was evoking was- how do I live my life? How do I do such things as see, taste, touch, listen, and think? For example, do I listen only to confirm my own thoughts? Do I listen only to gain an answer, or do I listen to hear what is said? As well, how do I see? Do I see my mother or my father through the lenses of experience; through the image I have created based on past experience? I say I know they are this or that, because of what they have done or not done in the past. Or do I see my mother and father for who they are each and every moment?

I do not think that insights into mindfulness only come from dogs; rather, I think

they are everywhere. When I think of my experiences with babies, I always remember this continuous exploration. They have to taste and touch everything. Even when children begin to speak they constantly ask: What is that? and what is this (pointing at each new thing)? As children age, I still see these characteristics of curiosity and excitement within them. For example, last summer I had to wait for a family to get out of their van so that I could enter my car. I think there were three children. One of the boys just stood beside his van and my car and looked up. I could not get into my car because of the boy's position. I thought to myself, what is this kid doing? I finally looked up to discover that the boy was watching an airplane fly. I did not hear the airplane. I think because I have become accustomed to airplane noises, I do not always hear them. So, I think that these insights into mindfulness are everywhere; it just depends on whether or not we explore them.

1.1.1 Overview of Literature Review

Over the past twenty years the research community has had heightened interest in mindfulness-based meditation, present centered mind and body inquiry, because of its promising benefits for psychosocial illnesses (Astin, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 1982). The mindfulness intervention includes activities such as Hatha Yoga and Buddhist meditation (in daily activities such as physical activity and sitting), which have been used for thousands of years to cultivate mindfulness or samadhi (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Thakar, 2005).

Mindfulness researchers have predominantly used quantitative methods. Unfortunately, in the quantitative mindfulness literature the majority of studies have had methodological weaknesses (Baer, 2003; Bishop, 2002). The lack of an operational definition of mindfulness and a reliable and valid mindfulness measure

are seen as major weaknesses of the mindfulness literature. However, the act of operationalizing and measuring mindfulness ignores the works of some teachers/students of mindfulness that describe mindfulness as the immeasurable or indefinable (Suzuki, Fromm, Martino, 1963; Krishnamurti, 1964). This is not to say that we cannot use descriptions to spark learning into mindfulness, only to understand that the description is not the described when discussing mindfulness, as Krishnamurti has highlighted. The common tools utilized by mindfulness teachers to help spark students' learning into mindfulness are such things as yoga, questions, stories, and breath awareness.

Post positivist researchers, and mindfulness teachers and their students, are exploring the question: "What is mindfulness?" with different methods. To be able to utilize story to spark learning into mindfulness/represent the results of this study, I have completed a qualitative study exploring the question: How do middle-aged women yoga students inquire while participating in a mindfulness program?

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mindfulness-based meditation (MBM) is usually described as a treatment that helps people to develop awareness of the present, to live in the moment, and develop sustained attention (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness, a concept usually associated with Buddhism, has been adopted by the West and mainly moulded into a secular treatment for stress reduction (Baer, 2003), Mindfulness-based cognitive behavioural therapy (Baer, 2003; See Appendix F), or described by sport psychologists as a state of flow in sport (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; see Appendix F). MBM usually begins by having the participants lie or sit down (Bishop 2002); they are then asked to guide their attention to an object of observation (Kabat-

Zinn, 1982). The participants are asked to take note of, or observe, this object each moment. The breath is often used as an object of observation. Once a focus on the object of observation has been established, the participants are asked to acknowledge such things as their thoughts, emotions, and sensations. The participants then return their attention back to the object of observation.

Detachment or detached observation is learned in MBM during activities such as Hatha yoga, meditation (walking, sitting, eating) and body scans (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). During detached observation, such things as thoughts, sensations, and emotions are observed. No thoughts, sensations, or emotions are seen as more important than another or a more accurate description of reality (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). This type of observation is detached because observers are not judging the importance of or the accuracy of the observation. Lazarus (1993) suggested that people engaged in detachment might not be as emotionally vulnerable because there is no personal stake at risk.

Change is suggested to occur to people's cognitions, self-management skills, acceptance skills, and how people are exposed to events when engaged in mindfulness inquiry (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Linehan, 1993 as cited in Baer, 2003). There may no longer be an urgency or necessity to escape and avoid the present because catastrophic outcomes to the self are not present (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990, 1992 as cited in Baer, 2003). Rumination may be reduced by developing mindfulness skills because thoughts would be acknowledged and then attention would be redirected back to an object of observation such as the breath. Recognition of coping skills used may be improved by learning to observe the present (Linehan, 1993 as cited in Baer, 2003). A shift in acceptance may occur. Mason and Hargreaves's (2001) qualitative MBM study found a shift in acceptance: a shift from living in the past and future to

that of living in the present. “Mary” stated that “through the mindfulness and acknowledging what is going on in the moment, be it birds, singing, or walking along... you can start to enjoy life as it is happening rather than looking to the past or the future” (p. 206). The above changes are hypothesized to be the effective mechanisms of mindfulness for change in emotional distress (Baer, 2003). However, one contrary piece of evidence to the effective mechanisms of mindfulness for change in emotional distress did emerge in Mason and Hargreaves’s study. Jane stated, “mindfulness is like if you live this moment, the future generally takes care of itself. It’s a bit frightening at times... Does everything just fall into place?” (p. 206).

Presently, researchers are exploring the benefits of MBM for people with an illness that is mainly psychosocial in nature (Chang et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Sagula & Rice, 2004). There is support that MBM is effective for reducing depression, stress related outcomes, and chronic pain in clinical populations (Baer, 2003; Carlson, Speca, Patel, & Goodey, 2004; Teasdale et al., 2000). There is also support that MBM has been effective for reducing stress related outcomes in college students who are trying to cope with stress during the academic year (Astin, 1997; Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner, 1998).

Despite this evidence, the majority of MBM studies have had methodological weaknesses (Baer, 2003; Bishop, 2002). Of interest to this study, the lack of an operational definition of mindfulness and a reliable and valid mindfulness measure are seen as major weaknesses of the mindfulness literature.

In order to evaluate whether or not participants have developed mindfulness skills and to understand the effective ingredients of mindfulness training, researchers have emphasized the necessity of developing an operational definition and measure of mindfulness (Baer & Allen, 2004; Bishop et al., 2004). Bishop et al. (2004) have

proposed a two-component model, operational definition of mindfulness. They stated:

The first component involves the self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment. The second component involves adopting a particular orientation toward one's experiences in the present moment, an orientation that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (p. 232).

In general, the first component is characterized as attention and awareness, and the second component as acceptance (Brown & Ryan, 2004). Brown and Ryan commended Bishop et al. for taking on the difficult task of defining mindfulness.

A few concerns have arisen regarding Bishop et al.'s. (2004) operational definition of mindfulness. First, Brown and Ryan (2004) highlighted that Bishop et al. did not define attention and awareness, and sometimes use these terms interchangeably. Second, the description of attention and awareness appears to be contradictory. Brown and Ryan do not understand how a person can maintain a specific focus on something like the breath while welcoming all thoughts that arise. Third, the labeling of mindfulness as a metacognitive skill might be misleading. Metacognition is characterized as operating "within the realm of thought..." (Brown & Ryan, 2004, p. 243), and Brown and Ryan believe that mindfulness is different from metacognitive processes because mindfulness can work upon such things as thought. Simply, if mindfulness can act upon thought, then it cannot itself be thought (Brown & Ryan). Fourth, Bishop et al. proposed that mindfulness is the consciousness of primarily internal stimuli and thus is bound to meditation. Brown and Ryan argued that during the mindfulness process, both internal and external

events are explored, and as a result there is the possibility that mindfulness could be explored in other practices and is not limited to meditation. Fifth, acceptance is not seen to be a distinct factor of mindfulness, but an interwoven factor of awareness and attention. Thus, Brown and Ryan proposed that mindfulness can be operationally defined as “an open or receptive attention to and awareness of ongoing events and experience” (p. 245), where acceptance is interwoven in the act of experiencing what is.

The previous operational definitions and the mindfulness literature (particularly Buddhist literature) have guided researchers development of mindfulness measures, such as the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (Bishop et al., 2003), and the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS, Baer & Allen, 2004). The KIMS is the newest measure of mindfulness, which assesses mindfulness in daily life regardless of meditation experience. The KIMS is a 39-item scale that assesses four factors proposed to be mindfulness skills: observing, describing, acting with awareness, and accepting without judgment. The KIMS has initial reliability and validity support in an undergraduate psychology student population (Baer & Allen, 2004).

Baer and Allen (2004) acknowledged that reverse scoring might be one limitation of the KIMS. All of the items on the “accept without judgment” scale are reverse scored. Participants are asked to rate how judgmental they are on a 5-point likert scale. A score of 5 would indicate a higher tendency to judge, and a score of 1 would indicate low to nil tendencies to judge. For reverse scoring, a low judgmental score is assumed to translate into a tendency to be accepting and a high judgmental score is assumed to translate into a tendency to not be accepting. One reason given by Baer and Allen as to why reverse scoring might be needed to measure acceptance

is that it might be easier for participants to identify when they are judgmental rather than accepting, because mindless states are likely more common than mindful states. However, I must ask whether or not we can assume that the opposite of a measurement of judgment is a measurement of acceptance. Perhaps it is just a matter of mindless or judgmental states being easier to measure than mindful and accepting states?

The act of operationalizing and measuring mindfulness ignores the works of some teachers/students of mindfulness. Mindfulness has been described by some teachers/students as the immeasurable or the indefinable (Suzuki, Fromm, & Martino, 1963; Krishnamurti, 1964). Krishnamurti stated, “[t]he whole Western world is based on the idea of measurement, but in the East they have said, “Measurement is maya, illusion, therefore one must find the immeasurable” (1973, p. 440). As suggested by Kabat-Zinn, aspects that characterize the essence of mindfulness such as awareness, insight, and compassion are difficult to measure empirically, and therefore, these aspects might be overlooked by empirical investigation (Kabat-Zinn, 2000 as cited by Baer, 2003).

Although I do not think Krishnamurti ever used the term mindfulness when he discussed the immeasurable, he did refer to the meditative mind and the impossible question. I think my friend, Theresa, picked up on why mindfulness may be the immeasurable from Krishnamurti’s work, even though this insight may have been “subconscious”. Before Theresa set off on her travels around Australia, she asked me if she could borrow a book I recommended. I gave her “Think on these Things” by Krishnamurti (1964). After Theresa had read the book, she thanked me for lending her the book. Theresa said that the book was interesting, but it only left her with more questions and no answers. I think Theresa’s comment helps capture this

ongoing process of investigation into mindfulness, and perhaps there are no conclusions about what mindfulness is, nor five easy steps to mindfulness. Baer suggested that researchers should perhaps consider exploring the elements of mindfulness that are difficult to measure empirically.

I think Krishnamurti's works provides insight into the mindfulness process. He stated:

When we observe objective things like trees, clouds, the things outside of us, there is not only the space between the observer and the observed - the physical space- there is also the space of time. When we look at the tree there is not only physical distance, but there is also psychological distance. There is the distance between you and the tree, the distance created by the image as knowledge: that is an oak tree, or an elm. That image between you and the tree separates you.

But when the quality of the mind of the observer is without the image, which is imagination, then there is quite a different relationship between the observer and the observed. Have you ever looked at a tree without a single word of like or dislike, without a single image? Have you noticed what then takes place? Then, for the first time, you see the tree as it is and you see the beauty of it, the colour, the depth, the vitality of it. A tree, or even another person, is fairly easy to observe; but to observe oneself that way - that is to observe without the observer - is much more difficult. So one must find out who is the observer (Krishnamurti, 1973, p. 444).

To me, Krishnamurti is asking me to explore how I observe? Do I observe the tree through the lenses of such things as experience, the past, language, and logic? Or am I curious about the content of the lenses? To me, Krishnamurti is inviting me to explore the content of my lenses so that in doing so I may remove them from my

vision. Some may wonder if Krishnamurti is saying that imagination is bad. I do not think Krishnamurti is saying that imagination is bad or good. I think we can learn a lot from imagination. However, I think perhaps when imagination is no longer used for creativity and exploration we must begin to understand how imagination can shape our reality without us noticing.

Together, we must look into the impossible question to again catch Krishnamurti's insights into mindfulness. Again, Krishnamurti suggests insight into this impossible question.

So I am asking the most impossible question, which is: to have this whole content of consciousness exposed and understand it, see it totally, without time - which means without analysis, exploration and seeing layer after layer, which is an expenditure of time. How is the mind to observe this whole content with one look?

If that question is put to you, as it is being put now, if you are really listening to that question, what is your response? You obviously say "I can't do it". You really don't know how to do it. Are you waiting for somebody to tell you? If I say to myself, "I don't know, am I waiting for somebody to inform me - am I expecting an answer? When I am expecting an answer, then I already know. Are you following this? When I say, "I don't know, I *really* don't know" - I am not waiting for anybody to tell me, I am not expecting anything because nobody can answer it. So I actually don't know. What is the state of the mind that says "I really don't know"? I can't find it in any book, I can't ask anybody, I can't go to any teacher or priest, I really don't know. When the mind says "I don't know", what is the state of that mind? Please, don't answer me. Do look at it, because we always say we know.... (1973, p. 447).

To me, Krishnamurti is asking me how do I live my life? How do I do such things as smell, taste, touch, feel, and listen? I have an urge to state how I observe, listen, taste, and do all the rest of it. That is, I have an urge to say I know. So, I look into this urge to provide an answer. Do I want to satisfy my questioner? Do I want to show people how “wonderful” I observe or listen? Do I want people to see my “faults”? I look into what is sparking this urge. What is motivation? Why do I want to be something? Why do I accept authority? What is fear? When I continuously observe how I live my life, by observing the image I’ve come to “know”, I begin to understand how I observe and listen in the present.

I acknowledge that there are many different philosophies about mindfulness and practices to cultivate mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn (2003) explained that even within the tradition of Buddhism there are different streams that utilize different mindfulness practices. Kabat-Zinn faced difficult decisions about which mindfulness practices to utilize in a mindfulness program. I face similar concerns and decisions. Now that the preliminary mindfulness program has been developed and used for over twenty years, it is time to look into its inquiry process.

I question whether or not the MBM program provides an atmosphere of freedom to explore and question because of its prescriptive approach. In the words of Kabat-Zinn, he instructs participants to “avoid becoming involved in the content of individual thoughts. Observe them as impermanent mind events and not necessarily accurate. Treat all thoughts as equal in value and neither pursue them nor reject them” (1982, p. 36). Baer (2003) acknowledged that tasks are prescribed but do not have a specific goal. But why should I or shouldn’t I do such things as suspend judgment and develop an attitude of non-striving? Will it help me become something I want to be....enlightened or perhaps free of anxiety? Perhaps I should do as I am

told because you are the guru and I am merely the “student”. So, I guess I will not look into what authority is and how it shapes my experiences. I will not look into why I want to become something. The question remains then, how do I “see” what is - when such things as authority, wants, and ideals are influencing my “vision”?

I think Krishnamurti’s insights into the mindfulness inquiry style have not been seriously considered for the development of the MBM program, even though Kabat-Zinn (1982; 2003) acknowledged that the essence and roots of mindfulness are found in the works of Krishnamurti and others. Krishnamurti did not prescribe any particular practice to cultivate mindfulness (Krishna, 2005). We must ask ourselves, why did Krishnamurti not provide specific practices to cultivate mindfulness? Was he inviting us to explore mindfulness in all aspects of life in whatever form, whether it be through dialogue, movement, or the senses? Was he acknowledging that he did not have the answers or perhaps there are no answers? When we have one program that is repeated, are we saying that we know “the way”? But what is it that we know? In order to create an environment of freedom, must we not continuously change the mindfulness program so that we “never stop in a certain place and say[,] I know” (Krishnamurti, 1963 as cited in Holland, 2004, p. 478).

I modified the MBM program in my own research because of its prescriptive inquiry style and because it was developed mainly for chronic pain patients. Kabat-Zinn (1982) explained that Zen and Vipassana mindfulness meditation techniques sometimes lead to pain when it is practiced for a long duration (sometimes 12 hours per day) in a sitting position. When pain is experienced during meditation, the meditator utilizes the observation and attention skills learned in a mindfulness program to detach from the pain. Kabat-Zinn hypothesized that “...insights stemming from the observation of pain arising during meditation might serve as a

model for developing a testable intrapsychic strategy that patients may use for coping with chronic pain” (p. 35). So, the original mindfulness-based meditation program was developed for chronic pain patients who were not responding to traditional medical treatment (Kabat-Zinn, 1982).

The purpose of this study’s mindfulness program is to provide an environment that supports freedom to explore. Buddhism and Krishnamurti recognized that each person must discover mindfulness for oneself (Krishnamurti, 1964; Suzuki, Fromm, Martino, 1963; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1998, see Appendix F). However, collaborative discovery into mindfulness by the “teacher” and the “student” may provide the student with insight into mindfulness for later inquiry. Often, mindfulness is synonymously used with the term “insight” meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). So, as a “teacher”, I may be able to show students the unlimited choices of “paths” or “doors”; however, I recognize that I cannot take the student through the door or tell them which door to take. As Krishnamurti (1964) stated, my work is finished once the student sees the door.

Mindfulness can be viewed as a “new” way to inquire or educate. Orr (2002) highlighted that some educators have abandoned the “banking concept of pedagogy,... [where] the primary task of teachers is to fill students’ heads with established knowledge and instrumental procedures” (p. 477). Orr provided the words of Hooks to suggest the function of education, “the practice of freedom” (p. 478). Learning non-traditional education techniques, such as mindfulness practices, has been said to trigger “passionate classroom debates, not only deep intellectual [debates] but often deep emotional struggles, by both students and faculty, to come to terms with what they are learning” (Orr, 2002, p. 478). Krishnamurti emphasized the importance of young people having the opportunity to explore this “new” type of

inquiry or education.

Krishnamurti and the Krishnamurti Foundations have developed schools around the world for preschool to high school aged students (Krishnamurti Foundation India, 2005; Krishnamurti Foundation Trust, 2005). Krishnamurti schools try to provide a holistic education, where schools not only provide academic knowledge “but also [try] to cultivate an understanding, an inquiry into the whole psychological structure of human beings” (Krishnamurti, 1981). Shapiro, Schwartz, and Bonner (1998) also recognized that the intention of a mindfulness program is not to replace traditional Western education but to be complementary.

I have developed a mindfulness program for middle-age women yoga students, with the underlying philosophy of the program inspired by Krishnamurti’s works. In the West, over 30 million people are estimated to be practicing yoga (Gopalananda, 2003). In the United States, the population that typically practices mind-body therapies such as meditation and yoga are middle-aged adults ranging from ages 40 to 49 years (Wolsko, Eisenberg, Davis, & Phillips, 2004). Yoga is thriving today in the West (Cooper, 2002), and Lasater (2000) suggested that this is a reflection of peoples need to reconnect with their mind, body, and spirit. I purposefully selected (a qualitative recruitment strategy) middle-aged female yoga students that I teach/had taught yoga to, or that I knew from the yoga studio, because middle-aged women comprise the majority of students at the yoga studio, and, because I have developed relationships with these women as their yoga teacher or fellow yoga student. At the beginning of this study I thought that this relationship should foster trust and openness to speak about and discuss mindfulness, which it did. As well, these middle-aged female yoga students already valued and were interested in learning about mindful inquiry because mind, body, and spiritual inquiry opportunities are

provided in yoga.

Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years and is usually translated as to yolk or the union of the “mind”, “body”, and “spirit” (Mehta, 2000). Yoga has eight aspects or limbs that are explored. The eight limbs are characterized as ethical precepts, personal practices such as self-discovery, the asanas (yoga postures), the art of breathing, moving from the external to an internal journey, concentration, meditation, and samadhi (Mehta, Metha, & Mehta, 2003).

There are many branches of yoga such as Raja yoga, Karma yoga, and Hatha yoga. In the West, most people practice Hatha yoga (Howell, 2006), which emphasizes the physical exercises (asanas) to align the skin, muscles, and bones (Lee, 2006). The asanas are used to cultivate a quiet mind, and to prepare the mind and body for meditation (Iyengar, 2005). Each yoga branch has its own practices, but all work to join the body, mind, and spirit (Mehta, 2000).

Feuerstein (2003) has commented that the majority of yoga in the west is “watered down” yoga. He reminded us that it is the inward journey (or one could say the mindfulness) that makes the asanas yoga, and a qualified teacher is needed to spark this journey. Similarly, Iyengar (2005) has said that yoga is an inward journey and “one must gain far more than technical proficiency, and one must do asana not merely as a physical exercise but as a means to understand and then integrate our body with our breath, with our mind, with our intelligence, with our consciousness, with our conscience, and with our core. In this way, one can experience true integration and reach the ultimate freedom” (p. 23).

The purpose of this study’s mindfulness program was to provide the students with an atmosphere of freedom to discover and explore. Specifically, a program that

provided students with the opportunity to explore the mind that says “I know” and a mind that says “I don’t know” through such activities as discussions, Hatha yoga, daily exploration tasks, and journaling. Holland (2004) used a quote from Krishnamurti to capture this shared inquiry by student and teacher: “But surely the teacher as well as the student has to be uncertain; he too has to inquire, to search. That is the whole process of life from the beginning to the end, is it not? Never to stop in a certain place and say[,] I know” (p. 478).

1.2.1 Concluding Thoughts

Even though it is difficult, I think I must acknowledge or be content with mindfulness possibly being the indefinable and immeasurable. However, I do not think this is a negative point in terms of understanding mindfulness. I am grateful that collaborative discovery into mindfulness, by the “teacher” and the “student”, can provide the student with insight into mindfulness for later inquiry, as I think Krishnamurti has alluded to.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study was to try to spark insight into how a particular group of middle-aged women yoga students inquired while participating in a mindfulness program. As well, the purpose of this study was to spark initiative in these women, educators, and the “reader” to inquire into the mindfulness process. The grand narrative question (Creswell, 2003) that I explored was: How do middle-aged women yoga students inquire while participating in a mindfulness program?

CHAPTER 2

2.1 METHODS

This study was a qualitative instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). The study was completed in two phases. In the first phase, professionals in the mindfulness field provided feedback on this study's mindfulness program in order to improve the program. In the second phase, the middle-aged women yoga students participated in a mindfulness program where the students' experiences were documented by audio/video recording and their journaling.

2.1.1 Participants

2.1.1.1 Phase 1 participants

The principal researcher, Rachel Donen, contacted the Phase 1 participants. The Phase 1 participants were mindfulness/yoga professionals who volunteered to provide program feedback. The mindfulness/yoga professionals gave me permission to include their names in this study. I wanted to acknowledge their contributions to this study. They were: Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D. (the founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School), Mark Lee (the director of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America), and Patricia Dewar, Ph.D (a teacher and student of various body practices for over 30 years, and yoga for the last 15 years). Burna Purkin, M.Ed. provided feedback on the journaling instructions.

2.1.1.2 Phase 2 Participants

First, ethical approval was attained from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (see Appendix A). I then contacted the key informant, my yoga instructor. The key informant is someone who knows the group of interest well, and can direct me to contacts (Creswell, 1998). I asked my yoga teacher, Patricia Dewar (Ph.D), for permission to recruit students from her studio, Yoga Central. I asked Patricia, which middle-aged female yoga students she thought would be most willing to speak about/discuss mindfulness and participate in a mindfulness program. Purposefully selecting participants who are willing to talk about the phenomenon of interest and participants who can help us learn about the phenomenon of interest, are recommendations in qualitative research for selecting a sample (Patton, 2002). I contacted the women yoga students by phone whose names were provided by Patricia. Five women declined participation. Eight women consented to participate in this study; however, one woman had to drop out halfway through the program (see Appendix B for the women's consent form). The woman who dropped out allowed me to include the information she had shared up to that point.

Patton (2002) suggested that there was no required number of participants needed in qualitative research, but; one should select the number of participants that will best answer the study's research question. Kabat-Zinn (1982) recommended a group setting for an optimal educational environment during mindfulness programs. A maximum of 30 participants in a group is used for Mindfulness-based meditation Stress Reduction programs (Baer, 2003). I chose to include a minimum of 6 participants and a maximum of 10, because this study's mindfulness program has a larger discussion component than the original MBM program. As well, I chose this sample size because qualitative researchers work with smaller samples in order to

provide great detail into the selected topic (Patton, 2002).

2.1.2 Procedures

In Phase 1, program feedback was requested from the professionals in order to improve this study's mindfulness program. Hollon et al. (2002) suggested that clinicians should be included in the development of new psychosocial interventions and the modification of existing psychosocial interventions, such as Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy, "because no one is closer to the immediate phenomenon of clinical change than the practicing clinician..." (p. 618). Further, inclusion of the developers of new or existing interventions for research consulting was recommended.

The feedback comment sheet was an open-ended format. There were two types of feedback sheets: Feedback Form 1 (see Appendix C) asked for feedback on all of the activities in the program, and Feedback Form 2 (see Appendix D) asked for feedback only on the activities in the professional's area of expertise. Due to time constraints, instead of completing the feedback form, Jon Kabat-Zinn generously agreed to discuss over the phone some of my questions I had about the mindfulness program in this study. He also recommended that I read "This Light in Oneself: True Meditation" by Krishnamurti before I began the mindfulness program, which I did. The professionals' data in Phase 1 was not reported in detail because it was only used to aid changes to the mindfulness program. When Phase 1 was completed, Phase 2 began.

2.1.3 Qualitative Case Study

2.1.3.1 Beginning of Phase 2

Qualitative methods of research emerged from sociologists, anthropologists,

historians, and ethnographers (Stake, 1995). In general, qualitative methods are used to understand phenomenon, highlight the personal or subjective, and to construct knowledge. For this research, the qualitative tradition of case study was employed. Specifically, the case study was a collective instrumental case study. A case is a “bounded system” (Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) commented that if the case has no end in sight in terms of participants to be included and time spent in the field “then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case” (p. 28). For this study, the collective cases were a group of middle-aged women yoga students.

I observed and interacted with the students during the six and a half weeks of the programming. Mindfully observing myself, the students, and any object of observation moment by moment, as well as interacting with students, are tasks completed by the mindfulness teacher during MBM (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Included in this six and a half week period was part of a session to build rapport and part of a session for final questions. The study took place at the yoga studio, with the exception of our visit to the SPCA.

With instrumental case studies, the case is not the primary interest. The case is a medium to understand an issue or phenomenon (Stake, 1995). The phenomenon explored in this study was how middle-aged women yoga students inquired while participating in a mindfulness program. The primary objective of case studies is not to make generalizations from the case(s) to the population (Yin, 1994). However, naturalistic generalizations are facilitated and assertions (propositional generalizations) are provided. Assertions can be thought of as the researcher’s interpretations of the data, which are shared with the audience (Stake, 1995). Naturalistic generalizations, as defined by Stake and Trumbell (in Stake, 1995), are “conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious

experience...” (p. 85). So, as a writer I provided vicarious experience in order for the audience to learn about, learn from, and personally explore the phenomenon of how the students inquired. The intention of the data I collected and the data analysis I presented was to facilitate naturalistic generalizations and to provide some assertions.

2.1.4 Data Collection

The students were asked to journal their experiences in the mindfulness program, because narrative writing may spark insight into mindfulness in a similar way as other mindfulness methods (Brody & Park, 2004). Narrative writing supports and evokes personal discovery (Brody & Park, 2004). During narrative writing, a person brings his or her attention to, and acknowledges, such things as current thoughts, emotions, images, experiences, and values. An environment of freedom to question and explore is also facilitated during narrative writing. Narrative writers are not restricted to a specific practice and are free to be creative in their expression and exploration of such things as thoughts, ideas, and emotions (Brody & Park, 2004).

The journal instructions from Holland’s (2004) mindfulness university class were used as a template for this study’s journaling instructions. See Appendix E for the initial journal instructions and the modified journal instructions.

I also took field notes after each mindfulness “class”. I wrote about such things as a description of the students’ inquiry styles and my thoughts/feelings regarding the students’ inquiry styles and my teaching. The field notes were dated in chronological order. The lesson plans were dated in chronological order and stored. The mindfulness program was also video/audio taped. Only my supervisor and myself had access to the transcripts and videotapes. The students’ information was used only

to describe how they inquired.

2.1.4.1 Mindfulness Program

A large part of this study's mindfulness program was Hatha yoga, but also included a guest speaker on palliative care, a trip to the SPCA, an exercise on developing multiple perspectives about palliative care issues, body scans, journaling, daily exploration tasks, and many discussions. The original mindfulness-based meditation (MBM) intervention developed by Kabat-Zinn (1982) included Hatha yoga, meditation (sitting, walking, standing, and eating), sweeping body scans, and asked participants to complete home practices. Generally, MBM is 8 to 10 weeks, in groups of a maximum of 30 people, and once a week for 2 to 2.5 hours (Baer, 2003). The original MBM program's time frame was followed as closely as possible for this study. This study's mindfulness program was six and a half weeks, 2 days per week (except the last week only had one session), for approximately 90 minutes a session (see Appendix F for the complete mindfulness program).

We met Friday and Sunday afternoons. The first Friday session included rapport-building time. The first three weeks of the Friday sessions were comprised mainly of in-class discussions, as well as, 5-10 minutes of journaling about the session's activity; and I assigned a daily exploration task. Generally, the last four Friday sessions were discussions about the mindfulness program's out-of-class activities, as well as, 5-10 minutes of journaling; and I assigned a daily exploration task. All of the Sunday afternoons (except for the last Sunday) were approximately 60-minute yoga classes. After the yoga, approximately 20-minute discussions followed, 5-10 minutes of journaling about the session's activity; and I assigned a daily exploration task. The final session was dedicated to inviting the women to share their overall experiences

in the program, and to answer any final questions.

The purpose of this study's mindfulness program was to support students' freedom to discover and explore the subtleties between knowing and understanding. All of Krishnamurti's work explored knowing and understanding, what he termed "freedom from the known". From my understanding of Krishnamurti's work, included under the broad topic of knowing and understanding was: What does listening, learning, and compassion mean? Krishnamurti invited us to listen to, learn from, and be compassionate to what we bring to our experiences, our beliefs, so that the mind can be very quiet and learn something new. The above topics, including the broader topic of knowing and understanding, were the focus of each activity in this study's mindfulness program.

These topics were explored in and out of the classroom, as mindfulness takes place in our moment to moment lives; as yoga takes place on and off the mat. Specifically, the classes began inside the classroom with discussions, providing the power of knowledge for understanding. Yoga sessions were completed throughout the program to aid the student's exploration of listening, learning, and compassion during movement and stillness. Then, the women heard the palliative care speaker's stories, providing the power of stories for understanding. We then ventured outside of the classroom to the SPCA, providing the power of experience for understanding. Then, the women were asked to listen and to observe during a daily activity, developing awareness moment by moment. Throughout the program the women were given questions to explore in order to encourage them to find out for themselves.

The euthanasia multiple perspectives activity, the palliative care speaker activity, and the SPCA experience activity were introduced because they were highly

emotional topics. However, first rapport had been developed within the group and exploration of listening, learning, and compassion had begun. Generally, I began with highly emotional topics/experiences that lead to more mundane topics/experiences. The highly emotional topics grab our attention, assertively asking for listening, learning, and compassion to take place. Once the women's attention was raised, and mindfulness topics had been explored, I asked the women to listen and to observe in their daily lives in order to develop awareness moment by moment, in activities that are usually done mindlessly.

Note, all of the activities in the mindfulness program can be done mindlessly; it is the job of the teacher to bring out the mindfulness for the students the activity implies. For example, the student's had some fears about visiting the SPCA because they thought they knew that they might see a dog euthanized, however; after their experience at the SPCA the women shared such things like how much they giggled while bathing a dog and what they saw was different then what they had assumed would happen (understanding). To help spark the student's journey into mindfulness (or the subtleties between knowing and understanding) I asked them to explore, and we discussed, a question like: What is it like to explore with a mind that says "I know", and with a mind that says "I don't know" (Krishnamurti, 1973)?

2.1.5 Data Analysis

I followed Creswell's (2003) qualitative analysis steps. First, all of the participants' journals and my field notes were organized in chronological order. Second, I reviewed all of the journal entries and all of my field notes. Third, I coded the journal entries and my field notes for different mindfulness themes. Also, in the margins of the journals and my field notes, I wrote my initial thoughts about the data

and its connection to mindfulness. I crosschecked the margin notes and codes from the journals with the margin notes and codes from the field notes. Fourth, I used the codes and the margin notes to describe the setting, participants, and the themes. The description of the themes was created from the analysis of single cases and from the analysis across cases. Fifth and sixth, I created fictional narratives to represent the interpretations of the data. Narratives can be real or fictional (Sullivan, 2005), but I think all narratives have an element of fiction or human perspective.

The fictional story was created from the patterns that emerged from the journal and field note codes and margin notes; the descriptions of the setting, participants, and themes; my insight into mindfulness, and the insights of meditation authors. Stake (1995) supports that “[t]he search for meaning often is a search for patterns” (p. 78). The fictional story represented the women’s inquiry in the mindfulness program. The title of each chapter in the story represented a theme(s) of the women’s mindful inquiry. None of the participants’ names were used in the story, and all participants were given pseudonyms in the subsequent discussion of the themes.

I chose to represent the qualitative results as a short fictional novel for two reasons. First, fictional stories can be used in research for educational ends (Barone, 2001). Fictional stories evoke questions about the familiar; they evoke questions about our unquestioned values, beliefs, and ideals, and they evoke questions about possibility (Barone, 2001). They do this by transporting the reader to a possible world where the characters’ activities are considered and reflected upon. A “successful” story is deemed by Barone to spur the reader to reexamine and reconsider his or her “taken-for-granted” values, beliefs, and practices. Barone suggested that only a credible story, a story informed by research and the perspectives of people who have insight into the phenomenon of interest, evokes

questions. Sullivan (2005) suggested that arts-based research, such as narrative, “reveals important insights unable to be recovered by more traditional research methods” (p. 61). This evocation of questions and revolt inspired by story mirrors the mindfulness process of inquiry that Krishnamurti has alluded to. As well, stories and poetry are often used to spark insights into mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

The second reason why I chose to represent the qualitative results as a short fictional novel was, because the characteristic of honesty is interwoven in fiction. Narratives acknowledge that they provide a truth-likeness, not truth (Bruner, 1985). In the words of Arvey (1998) she identified that “we cannot reproduce past events. Our stories (and transcriptions of these stories) do not mirror the world as lived because our stories are constructed retrospectively” (p. 2). The author’s voice and interpretations are acknowledged as ever present in the writing of research (Arvey, 1998). The stories do not provide resolutions, answers, and statements that purport meaning (Barone, 2001). Again, I think that story mirrors the mindfulness process of inquiry because of the shared characteristic of honesty. Krishnamurti (1981) once stated “...no one can lead you to truth, to illumination, to the right kind of meditation, to right behaviour, no one, because each one of us is responsible for oneself, not depending on anybody at all.”

I acknowledge that by creating a short fictional novel from the participants’ journals and video/audiotapes of the program I have placed my interpretation on what styles of inquiry emerged during the mindfulness program. I also acknowledge that when I interpreted the mindfulness program or just review the past, we no longer capture what is. My intention of creating a fictional story was to provide vicarious experience of and insights into the mindfulness process as highlighted by the

students, meditation authors, and myself.

2.1.5.1 Methods of Verification

Trustworthiness techniques, confirming the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 1998), were established. The trustworthiness techniques that were included in this study were 1) triangulation (field notes, observations, video/audiotapes, and journals), 2) member checking themes (confirming the accuracy of the themes with the participants. One participant read the novel and gave feedback about whether or not she thought that the story captured her experience, and the group's experience, in the mindfulness program.), 3) the use of rich thick description, 4) clarifying the bias I bring to this research by including my perspective of mindfulness throughout the written document, 5) spending a prolonged period of time with the participants, and 6) if discrepant information about the mindfulness program is found, then it was presented. Many of these trustworthy techniques have been discussed in detail throughout the thesis proposal. Throughout the mindfulness program I treated the participants in an ethical manner, respecting the information they provided and their choice, if it so happened, to withdraw from the study at any time.

History/ "fact" and fiction are not mutually exclusive, with examples such as *Animal Farm* and *The Lord of The Rings*. As Barone (2001) stated, a credible story is informed by research and the perspectives of people who have insight into the phenomenon of interest. The importance of a credible fictional story for learning/research is that the essence/message of the story will remain with us even when the details of history/ the "facts" are forgotten.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 RESULTS

3.1.1 Sacred Moment Sacred Space

The next 55 pages is a fictional story that captures how the women inquired in the mindfulness program. The story is based on the information the women shared during the program, my own insights into mindfulness, and the insights of meditation authors. The title of each chapter represents the theme(s) of the women's' mindful inquiry. The sub themes of each chapter depict the nuances of each theme. Chapter one was titled: "Everybody has a Story", and its sub themes were "How we became friends" and "What is the importance of friendship, laughter, and trust?" Chapter two was titled: "The Oneness of Learning, Listening, and Compassion". Chapter three was titled: "Who's Listening?", and its sub theme was "There is so much power in a question". Chapter 4 was titled: "How do we Explore a Question?" and its sub theme was "I don't know".

Sacred Moment Sacred Space

RACHEL M. DONEN

SACRED MOMENT

SACRED SPACE

Rachel M. Donen

Edited by Kent C. Kowalski (Ph.D.)

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Dedicated to Krishnamurti

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PROLOGUE

I am 57 years old today. I was born Aileen Elizabeth Carter. But most call me Allie. Some have known me as a teacher, a consultant, a dancer, a mother, a wife, a student, and a secretary. I have cared for many. Now I am retired from all professions. So much time has past; I have changed: my hair a little thinner, my hips a little sorer, and my soul a little riper. I have seen and heard many things in my life: birth, loves, struggles, fears, relationships, dying, and death. There is so much learning in all of these experiences. So much learning that comes from hearing and exploring the questions that present themselves in each experience. I did not always, and do not always, hear these questions though. What I am learning, is that if I am to hear these questions I must enter each moment as a learner.

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CHAPTER 1

EVERYBODY HAS A STORY

I have been living in this house for over 25 years. Through the years my home has remained a place of stability, a place of support, and a place I feel centered in. My home is a very large home close to the end of the block. From the front grass you see a white cement house with gray trim around the windows, doors, and roofs. The cement at the bottom of the house is cracking and some of the gray trim is chipping.

This house has a lot of charm. It is a two-level house with a basement, where the two upper levels from the outside are divided by trim that forms the shape of two sailor hats stacked one on top of each other. Around the house is a whitish picket fence; each section of the fence is leaning in somewhat different directions. The front grass is mainly coarse with patches of new growth that are moist and soft, and there are leaves scattered everywhere. A cool breeze is present, yet the sun is warm: it is spring!

Every now and then I enjoy lying on the grass and taking naps in the shade. The front yard is flat and shaped like a long dinning room table, and a brick walkway runs through the middle of the grass to the front door. The front door is on the south side of the house, as is a large lengthwise rectangular window. A large, smooth, rounded, gray stone sits on the ground at the left side of the front door. There is an outer and inner door: the outer door is mainly filled with glass

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windows, whereas the inner door is heavy wood that has been painted gray. A lion's head rests at the center of the door.

The front entrance of my home is graced with different plants growing wildly on the right side, open space, and cool gray tiles line the floor. There is a large window on the right allowing the sunlight to fall in, and a glass hexagon light fixture hangs down from the tall prickly ceiling. There are prickly ceilings and walls throughout the house that look like various whitish stalactites. The front entrance is warm. From the front entrance, sunken from the rest of the house, you can see the entrance into the kitchen. White crown molding lines this entrance. A closet with tall white doors stands straight ahead and blends into the whitish walls and ceiling. A winding staircase sits beside the closet and overtop of the front entrance. Art hangs throughout the house: all of nature, framed in multiple colors of either metals or woods. The house is illuminated each day with the sunrise.

Everything is large in this house: large rectangular windows, endless hardwood floors, and oversized furniture. You must pass through a doorway on the left to enter the living room, where sometimes the glass door lining the doorway is open, which I enjoy.

At the front of the living room is a large bay window covering the entire front wall. You can almost see the entire block from here. A row of birch trees lines both sides of the street; and robins, chickadees, crows, cars, and people sporadically flow past the window.

I like to watch the birds from this window. Their movements are flowing, graceful, fearless, sharp, and bouncy. The robins have the most peculiar movements:

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hop, hop... scuttle, scuttle and repeated again and again. As I watch the birds for longer periods of time I start to notice the pauses between their movements, the stillness. It seems as though whenever the birds produce movement there is also stillness: stillness before, in the middle, or at the end of movement. The movement and stillness are one, connected. Watching the birds brings a smile to my face and a gentle depth to my breath.

At both bottom corners of the window are smaller wooden tables with glass tops. They both display oversized gray lamps with shades covered in gray chiffon. Pictures of the family are scattered on top of the tables, along with wooden and stone sculptures. Coming out from the window are two couches that are on outward diagonals to each other. There is room for two on a couch. One armrest on each of the couches holds a knitted blanket.

Sitting on the couch farthest from the entrance into the living room, I can see the large wooden coffee table with a glass top that rests in-between the couches. A plant sits on the table, along with a book and more wooden and stone sculptures. Despite the number of objects in the room, there is space to walk because each object has been organized like a gallery. The walls are covered with rows of framed art, almost museum-like in display, where overhanging lighting illuminates each nature scene. The room houses a black fireplace, and a wooden antique chair sits by the fireplace waiting for the warmth of the fire. There are numerous books lining a mahogany bookshelf. The books rarely see the light of day because they are overshadowed by the piano standing in the corner of

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the living room. The piano has a little bit of dust on it and is covered with various shaped vases and an oversized gray lamp that is identical to the others in the living room.

From the couch I can see the dining room at the back of the house. A few large, but tame plants sit on either side of the entrance to the dining room. The living room is quiet. All you can hear is the classical music coming from the kitchen (and the ticking of the clock over the main entrance into the dining room).

“Yes,” I say to my friend Nadine who is sitting beside me on my living room couch. “Yes, time seems to pass so quickly in my adult life. Yet I can still recall, very clearly, some memories of when I was just 16 years old attending high school.” Nadine is 63 years old, tall, white haired, an athletic build. She sports an ageless face, is a mother of two daughters, and a wife. I met Nadine in passing at yoga a year ago, but we did not start socializing until last month. We always say how surprised we are at how open and trusting we are of one another, even though we have known each other for such a short time. Nadine suggests that perhaps it is our shared experience at yoga that provides this familiarity, this depth of relationship.

How we became friends

It’s actually quite funny how Nadine and I first came to talk. About two months ago, Nadine had walked to yoga class one wintry February morning.

She lives 10 minutes away from the yoga studio, basically down the street and around the corner from her house. The studio is a raised basement of an old

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house where there is direct entry from the side door. You must climb down 10 stairs to reach the studio. It is a very simple space; one room with three large windows that stand like doors beside each other. The floor is hardwood and the walls are painted rainy day gray. The studio gets a lot of sunlight (at least on most days).

That February morning, Nadine went through class as she usually did, mindfully, as she would say. She was so focused inwards that she was aware of how her body was moving. When class was finished she walked up the stairs, opened the door and stepped out onto the walkway. As she was closing the door behind her she stopped suddenly, sighed and said, “I forgot to ask for an invoice for my membership renewal!” So she started to open the door.

I was beside her at the time and quickly stated, “No, I heard you ask.”

Nadine had let out a small laugh. “I was definitely not mindful at all!” Nadine replied with a laugh. (We both laughed). Nadine went on and said, “For me, it’s difficult the moment I walk out of the studio to be mindful. There are so many times during the day where you are not aware of absolutely anything; you are just going about your business. You are not connected within. You’re just not there. I want to know how I can live mindfully? It’s... it’s really a big challenge for me. I don’t want to come to yoga for my mindfulness. The escape...”

“Is that what we are doing?” I asked while smiling at Nadine.

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“How do we do yoga off the mat?” Nadine asked. (We both smiled at each other in affirmation while standing outside of the yoga studio in the snow).

My thoughts return to the present, to my conversation with Nadine. I look out my living room window and see the spring leaves on the lawn. As I look out the window, I go over my thoughts about the story that came to me instantly as I recalled my grade ten year. How trust seemed to play such an important role in my life.

“What stories do you remember from high school, Allie?” Nadine inquires.

“Hmm,” I reply with a moment of silence after. “Where do I begin?” Nadine is looking at me with great curiosity. She has leaned over towards me with a slightly rounded back. I start my story on the first day of my grade ten gym class.

What is the importance of friendship, laughter, and trust?

Allie was standing in her high school’s large gym. The gym was huge; it was as wide as it was high. The gymnasium floor had cold white tiles with painted circles and lines over them. This gym had seen many students. The floors were scuffed, three of the four concrete walls had random chips, and the various paint colors around the gym had faded a shade. You could see equipment lining the walls: climbing bars, hanging ropes, basketball nets, volleyball nets, a clock, and scoreboards. There was a stage for musicals, plays, and assemblies. The backdrop of the stage was an outdoor scene with one large tree, its leaves were

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multi-colored, and the sky above the tree was sky blue with intermittent clouds.

It was Allie's first day of grade ten gym class. How she hated gym class. Allie thought about what she would be asked to do today against her wishes, without choice. Today, again she would feel stupid. Allie thought to herself "*I hope I will be able to do today's activity.*"

"O.K. class, today we will be doing partner work. We are going to continue with how to land on our feet in partners ..." and Mrs. Goulet chattered on.

"*Oh God*", Allie thought to herself. "*My partner is going to think I'm a complete ass. Just wait until they feel my sweaty back and see my wimpy legs. I hope they have a sweaty back too...*"

"Class, get started. (Mrs. Goulet had paused for a moment to scan the room.) Allie did you not hear what I said?" Mrs. Goulet said.

Allie looked at her kind of blankly. "Umm, partner work?" she said with an inflection in her voice.

"Yes of course partner work. Now get over to your partner," Mrs. Goulet guided.

"Umm, Mrs. Goulet... who is my partner again?" Allie asked timidly.

In a slightly annoyed but amused voice Mrs. Goulet said, "Deana."

"*Hmm, Deana,*" Allie thought to herself. "*I've never partnered with Deana before. She's been in my gym class since grade nine and I don't really know her. I don't want to do this.*"

"Hi Allie," Deana said.

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"Oh. Hi," Allie muttered.

Deana stood there with her hand on her hip and slouched to one side. It looked like her "this is stupid look". It made Allie smile.

"Alright everyone, we are going to start with falling backwards into our partner's arms," Mrs. Goulet explained. "You will stand close to your partner to start off and then slowly move a little further away. Your back will be to your partner. You are not allowed to look back. Your partner bends their knees a little and takes a stance of hip width apart, ready to catch you. Then you fall straight back so that your partner can catch you. Make sure you get a spot on the mat and that you are not too close to the other groups..." Allie's back was getting sweatier. Allie hoped that Deana wouldn't notice.

"O.K. everyone begin," said Mrs. Goulet.

"Do you want me to catch you first?" Allie asked Deana.

"Umm, no. You go first," Deana said.

"Are you sure? I mean it doesn't matter - this is stupid anyway," Allie said quickly. Deana didn't respond. Allie thought she would have laughed or done something in agreement.

"Girls. Allie. Deana. Do you need help with something?" Mrs. Goulet remarked tersely.

"No, we're good," Deana replied.

"*Oh, God,*" Allie thought. "*It's my turn to fall. I don't want to fall on my head or something. She better catch me.*"

"O.K. Deana I'm ready; are you ready?" asked Allie.

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"Yep. Go," Deana beckoned. Nothing happened.
"Go Allie!"

As Allie fell backwards: her breath was rushed, her heart raced, and the air rushed by. Deana had caught her. Allie was resting in Deana's arms and was looking up at her with the biggest smile. They were uncontrollably laughing together. As Allie continued to look up at Deana she realized inside *"hey, I can do this."*

"O.K., O.K. my turn now (still laughing). Hurry!" Deana said.

"You may want to stand with your feet together," Allie remarked. "It's... it's better that way."

"Oh. O.K.," Deana replied while shrugging her shoulders. Deana completed her fall into Allie's arms. Neither could stop laughing; their bodies were shaking with laughter and their eyes and mouths were squinted with laughter. The girls did not hear Mrs. Goulet for the rest of class.

I pause, because I am not sure if Nadine wants me to continue story telling. I take this opportunity to drink some water.

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CHAPTER 2

THE ONENESS OF LEARNING, LISTENING, AND COMPASSION

As I shift my position on my living room couch, I glance at Nadine. She smiles back, and waits for me to continue my story. My memory brings me to approximately two months after Deana and I had first met in grade ten gym class.

It was November and Mrs. Goulet had been teaching her first grade ten class for two months now; actually this was her first class as a teacher. She had twenty-five grade ten students in her English and Gym classes (English was not Mrs. Goulet's major, though. Her majors were math and physical education). Mrs. Goulet had been a good university student; eager to learn, good grades, and had one of the most dedicated study routines (as it was driven by fear of failure). She knew that her education had prepared her well to teach, which had helped her confidence; however, doubt was suggesting otherwise.

Mrs. Goulet's classroom was an old portable. With a glance from the entrance you could see a classroom shaped as a narrow swimming pool. It had humid stale air, florescent lights buzzing, and an intense fear of space. The front of the class showcased a chalkboard almost completely covered by student art, motivational posters with

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such slogans as “no one can do everything, but everyone can do something”, calendars, colored paper, and the class rules. The portable did have windows along the wall opposite to the class entrance; however, the blinds covered most of them. All of the walls in the classroom were covered with stuff. Even the desks were clumped close to the entrance of the classroom into rows, five desks per row.

There was one gap in the room by the teacher’s desk. Mrs. Goulet’s desk claimed space (and space away from the students). Her chair was cushy and comfortable. In front of her desk sat two tables joined together to form a hexagon, this was the students’ table for reading. At the back of the room, the clock kept ticking.

Mrs. Goulet sat at her wooden desk and stared at the clock, waiting for her students to arrive. She was a petite lady with salt and pepper hair, short legs, and a few extra pounds around the hips.

It was eight forty-five.

Two seconds ago it was also eight forty- five.

Her nerves about teaching had calmed down over the last couple of weeks of teaching... but today she was anxious. Things at home and the progress of one of her students were not going as planned.

Mrs. Goulet’s husband was also a teacher. Mr. Goulet taught high school and coached the boys’ track team. They were trying to start a family of their own; however, things were not as easy as they thought they would be. Mrs. Goulet was pregnant, but she had had her second miscarriage

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a year ago. She and her husband continued to try despite the painful disappointments. She wondered if she could have kids and whether or not one day they might have to think about adoption.

These thoughts seemed to continue over and over like the re-runs of television shows. They would often distract Mrs. Goulet's listening during class. When they did she was hard on herself for letting her mind continue like that. Her self-disappointment also distracted her listening. Mrs. Goulet would try to get herself back to what was going on in the class, but this too would distract her listening. The more she tried the more difficult it became to listen to her students. It was a very tiring process.

To go along with the stress at home, a difficult situation presented itself with one of Mrs. Goulet's students: Deana.

Deana had been held back a couple of years and was now seventeen. She was incredible. She could get the class talking about the day's English subject, she knew so many books, their authors, she had so much passion, and she was interested in all of the information. She just seemed to have learned these things on her own because they were important to her. Unfortunately, Deana's writing skills were very poor. So, last week when Mrs. Goulet gave the class their first in-class essay to write, Deana handed her paper in after the first fifteen minutes and walked out.

The test was an hour long.

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Mrs. Goulet was shocked at how quickly she had completed the test. Mrs. Goulet looked at Deana's test, at what she had done. Her thoughts were close to perfect. Deana was so good in class; she knew all of the nuances of the books they had read. But, her writing wasn't good at all.

Mrs. Goulet knew that she would have to fail Deana, because she only had enough writing for approximately ten marks out of sixty. As a first year teacher Mrs. Goulet just thought to herself "Oh my... so I'm going to fail this kid and if it weren't for her I wouldn't have gotten through this English class... Hey, I'm no English teacher. Deana's the one that carried the class." After getting Deana's test back, Mrs. Goulet had visited a senior teacher near retirement for advice. All he had said was "Do what you need to do."

As Mrs. Goulet sat at her desk waiting for her students to arrive, she looked up at the clock again. It was eight fifty-five. An inner shudder traveled through Mrs. Goulet's body in reaction to the time.

"Hi Mrs. Goulet" the first students who entered the class said routinely.

"Hello boys" Mrs. Goulet replied as she noticed it was now eight fifty-six.

All the students were now in the class talking away. In a couple of minutes Mrs. Goulet would have to start class. She could see Deana from the corner of her eye, Mrs. Goulet could not tell if Deana was looking at her and was not ready to take a glance at Deana.

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Classes went on as usual: everyone reading, asking questions, brainstorming, writing, problem solving, investigating, learning. The particulars of the day went unnoticed by Mrs. Goulet as she played over and over in her mind the possible ways to handle Deana's test. She was only interrupted a few times by the memories of her last miscarriage.

It was now nearing the end of school time. Mrs. Goulet didn't know what to do. She studied the faces of her students to see if they would give her any clues. As Mrs. Goulet scanned the faces in the room she found Allie in conversation with Deana. Mrs. Goulet looked at Deana, still rough around the edges, but intelligence pouring out of her. Yes, her shoulders were slightly hunched forward today and her face drained of emotion, but she was still bright and promising. Of course, logically, it was easy to know what the right thing to do was, you know ten out of sixty marks is clearly a fail; she had no learning disorder; these were the rules; it was quite clear.

But Mrs. Goulet also heard herself.

"What are Deana's needs?"

"And what is learning anyways?"

Perhaps Mrs. Goulet did not hear these questions through articulated speech but she heard the essence of those questions as she looked at Deana and listened to herself. At this moment she felt a sense of peace. Mrs. Goulet dismissed the class and asked Deana over to her desk.

"Deana, can you come here for a moment?"

"Uhm, can it wait?" Deana asked hesitantly.

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"I just want to speak with you for a minute. Not long," Mrs. Goulet said kindly.

Deana went over to Mrs. Goulet's desk a bit hesitantly - leaving her books by her desk. Mrs. Goulet spoke first; she was holding blank paper and a pen.

"I don't care how long it takes you to complete the test I'm going to be here till three o'clock in the morning. You know, you write however you can. Do it however you can! If you want, you can talk to me about your answer first and then we can write down whatever you have told me. Let's answer the questions like that," said Mrs. Goulet excitedly.

Deana stayed with Mrs. Goulet that night until the test was done. Mrs. Goulet marked it as soon as Deana left for home. And she aced it. That was Deana's first A+ ever. And not that Mrs. Goulet gave any hints about the answers... she helped Deana formulate her writing but she knew her stuff.

Mrs. Goulet thought to herself about how Deana had been held back two years.

Mrs. Goulet also thought about the smile on Deana's face after completing the test.

Deana had been held back two years. For years she had probably thought she wasn't smart, because she had failed most of the tests throughout school.

At the house, Nadine quickly takes a sip of water so that she can say, "She's so lucky she had a compassionate teacher!"

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“Hmm, yes. Yes, lucky that Mrs. Goulet saw Deana that day. Saw the intelligence, the promise, the struggles. Lucky that Mrs. Goulet saw and heard who she was and what she needed,” I say slowly.

“What do you mean by lucky, Allie?” asks Nadine.

“Hmm,” I say with a small chuckle of disbelief at the memory that came to me at that instant. I see Mrs. Goulet’s face and Deana’s in my mind. I smile softly and sigh. “Well...” I say as I continue my story.

Mrs. Goulet’s class continued to meet for English and Gym class. Allie and Deana continued to talk and laugh together. It seemed that the students’ talking and laughter during English class became progressively louder as the weeks went on. The students’ were itching to have more outside time and just more time to talk socially.

Mrs. Goulet’s tension was rising from all of this noise. Her tension was also rising from the thoughts about her last miscarriage, but she did not know this. Mrs. Goulet’s stomach, heart, and back were in knots, but this too she was unaware of. Her body was crying out to her, but she was deaf. Mrs. Goulet’s body temperature had risen and beckoned “Hey.... you!” but still no reply. Her heart was getting heavier and called out to her “Hey you... can you feel that? Can you hear what I am trying to tell you? Can you open yourself to hearing the insights or the intuitions?” But again nothing. Mrs. Goulet was tired, her mind was racing, and she had trouble hearing.

A loud laughter erupted at the back of the class that jolted Mrs. Goulet out of her thoughts. “Girls,

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please get back to your work!" Mrs. Goulet scolded tersely. "If I don't see you girls using your time wisely, I won't be giving you anymore in-class time to work on your assignment."

The group of girls Mrs. Goulet was addressing, including Deana and Allie, were together at the back of the room discussing their ideas for possible poem topics. Each student had been assigned to write a poem about an experience where they had learned something. The ideas in the girls' group were quiet humorous.

Deana was annoyed by Mrs. Goulet's grumpy reaction to their group. The girls had been working. From somewhere deep inside Deana she could sense the change in Mrs. Goulet's behavior, a change in teaching style, but this was unconsciously known by Deana. Mrs. Goulet usually guided her students with care and kindness, but today her teaching style was directorial and resentful.

Mrs. Goulet was sitting at her desk with a pounding headache. There was so much clutter in the classroom: the posters, the books, the noise from the students' conversations, and the endless student art. And she couldn't stop the constant internal dialogue, the constant repetition of thoughts, the constant movement. Mrs. Goulet's chest was aching; she was beginning to feel flushed and short of breath. She was feeling overwhelmed. Mrs. Goulet's anxiety had risen. She was feeling claustrophobic; she was yearning for space.

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Again a loud laughter erupted at the back of the room. “Girls! Enough!” Mrs. Goulet shouted. “Everybody stop talking!” The class stopped all talking and laughter. They froze and stared at Mrs. Goulet. There was silence in the room. And then...

“What, did you have a miscarriage or something last week?” Deana stated from the back of the class without any intention of exploring the question, or any sensitivity to the context of her comment. At the beginning of the year Deana had heard that Mrs. Goulet was pregnant.

“...Yes...” said Mrs. Goulet with a blank and frozen look on her face.

From Deana’s knowledge of Mrs. Goulet’s pregnancy and from Mrs. Goulet’s newfound “grumpy” behavior, Deana had unknowingly sensed that Mrs. Goulet had had a miscarriage. Deana didn’t understand the meaning or implication of her own words to Mrs. Goulet, though. Deana had just said it. She didn’t even know the comment was coming. It was just a reaction to what she had sensed.

In response to Mrs. Goulet’s answer, Deana shrugged her shoulders and adjusted her sitting position to get more comfortable. She then continued writing and planning ideas for the poem assignment with her group.

The bell interrupted the class discussions and dismissed the class. Deana and Allie left together and the rest of the class filed out.

Mrs. Goulet was standing by her desk alone; she was listening now, there was space in her mind.

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Nadine is staring at me with her jaw open in disbelief. We sit on the living room couches looking at each other. Or you could say we sit there and look through each other blankly.

“Deana was not lucky that day,” I say. “Deana was not lucky like Mrs. Goulet was a few months ago when she was deciding the fate of Deana’s English career. You remember Mrs. Goulet’s difficult decision of whether or not she was going to give Deana a failing English mark because of her poor written performance on the in-class test, despite Deana’s brilliance in class discussions?”

Nadine nods her head.

“Mrs. Goulet didn’t fail Deana, because on that day she saw and heard what Deana’s needs were,” I say. “With another teacher, Deana could have failed that test on the simple logic that ten out of sixty marks equals a fail. But Mrs. Goulet was lucky because through listening to Deana, and learning about ‘what is learning?’ came compassion.”

“However, the day that Deana remarked about Mrs. Goulet’s miscarriage, Deana was not lucky enough to hear and see Mrs. Goulet with her mind, with her heart, and with her soul. She was not lucky enough to understand death and dying intellectually and also with her heart... with her entire being. She was not lucky enough to respond with compassion.”

“Yes, I remember that day very clearly,” I say after looking through my living room window to see the two robins that had just landed on my front lawn. “I remember Mrs. Goulet’s face. I could tell from her face that something was wrong, but I didn’t really

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understand Deana's comment. I just remember Mrs. Goulet standing there alone, staring, quiet." I re-adjust my sitting position on the couch to straighten out my back.

"Did Deana ever talk to you about her miscarriage comment to Mrs. Goulet?" Nadine asks.

"Yes she did... but not until that spring."

Deana had begun to show the first signs of sickness that spring: dizziness, fatigue, and pains in her abdomen. During that time Deana visited the doctor frequently; which meant that Allie and Deana did not see each other as frequently. Allie continued to attend school; and she visited Deana when she was allowed.

Deana missed the entire spring session of classes. She stayed at the city hospital for most of the winter, and was released in mid May to receive homecare. Now Allie could visit Deana whenever she was awake. Allie was relieved that Deana was home and that they were spending time together. Allie had missed her best friend.

Allie was hoping for a quick recovery. It was very annoying to her that Deana had to rest in bed almost the whole day. They would amuse themselves on Deana's bed by making bracelets together, watching their favorite t.v. shows together, talking about boys and other girls together, giggling, and giggling some more. Allie and Deana would eat cookies a lot during most of these activities. They would get a bowl of milk and then smoosh two cookies at the bottom of the bowl. If you looked at the mushy blob in their

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bowl you would have thought it looked disgusting. Allie would always say that it looked disgusting but tasted great. She had had to convince Deana to try this concoction though.

Allie had snuck into Deana's kitchen one day at 4pm to grab some cookies and milk. Allie had to sneak because she knew that Deana's dad would not approve of cookies before dinner. He would say "girls, no cookies before supper, they'll spoil your dinner." Allie rushed into Deana's room with the cookies and milk. They started to giggle and giggle some more. Deana and Allie giggled the whole time while they were making their yummy mush. And it must have been the giggling that day that gave them away because within minutes Deana's dad was in there shaking his head and saying "Girls... you're going to spoil your supper." When Deana's dad left, the girls continued to giggle as they ate their mush. The girls giggling was only interrupted by Deana's coughing.

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Weeks passed on Deana's bed. Allie was used to socializing with Deana on her bed now. This was an everyday occurrence. The girls continued to make bracelets for their friends and some for themselves. Deana stopped her bracelet making and just held the unfinished jewelry.

Deana wanted to know where she could reach Mrs. Goulet. She would like to tell Mrs. Goulet how sorry she was for blurting out in front of the class her comment about the miscarriage. Deana's

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comment that informed the whole class that Mrs. Goulet's baby had died. A comment that had no sensitivity to Mrs. Goulet's loss. Deana had begun to understand the power and insensitivity of her words, because of her own experiences with sickness and perhaps now with dying. Her heart ached as she thought of Mrs. Goulet.

Deana didn't want Allie to know that she was going to apologize to Mrs. Goulet though. She was insecure about exposing her not so nice side to her closest friend. So Deana asked Allie an indirect question that got at the information that she needed to accomplish her goal.

"Allie... is Mrs. Goulet still at school in her big comfy chair?"

"Umm, no," Allie said. "We have a new teacher, Ms. Sharon. They say that Mrs. Goulet needed some time off, but most of us heard it was from stress." Deana felt a knot form in her stomach in response to Allie's statement.

"Why?" Allie asked.

"Oh nothing really." Deana replied. "I just would have liked to talk with her one last time."

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CHAPTER 3

WHO'S LISTENING?

It was almost the middle of Allie and Deana's grade ten summer, and school would be finished in a month. Allie was making her way over to Deana's house to visit. Today they had planed a movie marathon.

Deana's mom let Allie into the house. Allie smiled quickly at Deana's mom, and then made her way to Deana's room. Out of the corner of Allie's eye she could see Deana's mom gently smiling back. Allie sat down at the foot of Deana's bed, but before Allie could say hello, Deana immediately began talking about what she had heard from her doctor today.

As Deana was talking, Allie thought about how Deana looked so small in her bed; so tiny. Deana's body was weak and her words were strained, as was her breath. Her mother would come in and dab Deana's lips with a wet swab so that she could swallow and talk. Allie thought that it almost seemed like Deana was starting to disappear in that bed, except that she was still a firecracker when they talked. That spark, wit, and cleverness was still there when they talked. Allie had been visiting Deana everyday. They would talk and continued to giggle together, Deana would sometimes sleep while Allie kept herself occupied, they would eat together, and sometimes they would play. Allie thought about how they hadn't

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played for a while.

“...I wanted to know how you felt about that, Allie?” Deana said.

Allie had missed most of what Deana had said because she had been busy in thought; however she responded quickly and sharply. “That’s just one doctor’s opinion.”

“Allie, that’s not just one doctor’s opinion, I mean a lot of doctors and surgeons and whatever other staff had to talk this over,” she replied.

Allie reacted with certainty. “Well, maybe you need to ask another team of doctors. You know how the first doctor you went to missed the first signs when you were just getting sick. And if it wasn’t for that other doctor that you went to see, things would’ve just gotten worse and worse until one day you would’ve gone into the hospital when it was too late. You would have gone into the hospital when there was nothing they could do for you.”

This was the first time Allie and Deana had talked about Deana’s illness and treatment plan. The girls were too uncomfortable with the subject matter to talk openly, but Deana had been engaging in an internal dialogue for months. Deana had already begun to understand what was happening to her; however, she was having a difficult time expressing this acceptance to her friend.

“I don’t think I can take another surgery or treatment, Allie. I don’t think I will. (Deana took a long sigh) No, I can’t handle another surgery or treatment. It’s just, it’s just too much for a 50%

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chance at life," Deana said.

"Deana there's a chance you can beat this thing. You can't give up hope and your life. What if you had the surgery and you got better, you would never know this if you didn't try. You have to try!" Allie reacted.

"Holy fuck Allie, would you just fucking listen to me," Deana said sharply as the tension in her jaw and shoulders increased. "Even a deaf person would... aw forget it!"

There was silence now. They stared at each other. Allie's stare was of confusion. Deana's was intense and sharp.

"What, what do you mean?" Allie replied quietly.

"You really don't understand, do you?" responded Deana while shaking her head from side to side. The tears were now pouring down Deana's cheeks.

"I, I, I,...I..." Allie muttered.

"You think just because you're here means you know what's going on." Deana shouted through the crying. "But you haven't heard a thing. Sure you may hear a few words or even sentences here and there, but you aren't listening to me."

Now the sharpness and intensity of Deana's gaze was gone and she was calming down. She looked more peaceful in her bed.

"Look, I love that you are here with me everyday so that I will not die alone," Deana said to Allie. "I am scared of this. I love that you try to make me laugh and smile on days when the pain is so bad I can't bear it, when I don't want to live like this. I am grateful for this. (Deana paused) I said a

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person who was deaf would be able to hear me because they could hear my heart, my spirit, my entire being and their own. Do you understand? It's not just hearing the sound outside of us that makes listening happen. It's also hearing from within. We can be so consumed, so preoccupied by our own grief that we can't listen."

Deana's lips were getting dry and chalky, so Allie took a wet swab from Deana's bedside table to wet them.

"I once heard someone say something like, compassion comes when our sorrow ends – which is the ending of self-centeredness or the ending of me", Deana said. "I understand how this may be difficult to hear, because we don't like to think of ourselves as without compassion," Deana pointed out after she had weakly adjusted her position in bed.

Deana was now breathing a bit softer and was completely tucked in bed with a warm flannel blanket. "I mean, when the pain first started, I would fill my mind with so many things because my body was so uncomfortable," Deana said. "I started to schedule myself completely so that I could get through the pain. I was always thinking, 'What's next? What's next?', so I could get through the day. I kept shutting off my body. I learned to stop listening to my body."

"But what I've learned, even in the last couple of weeks, is that I find it a bit emotional. I started wondering, maybe after all of this time of trying to shut off my body, I should listen to my body, to the pain, to what it's telling me and I might learn

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something. You know, is my body full of emotions because I'm in pain? Can I feel that my stomach is tense with fear? Can I feel that my jaw is clenched with anger? Can I feel that my chest is light with happiness? Can I listen to pain, anger, joy, sadness, love; to my body; all the difficulties we have in life so that I can learn something? Can I say wow, this really hurts right now, it's really killing me right now, and its here as my teacher?"

"I think this has helped me understand that I don't want another surgery or another treatment. I've tried those things already, and I've had to deal with the downside of treatments when they aren't successful."

(in a soft and gentle voice Deana said from her bed) "I'm dying Allie."

Allie was quiet.

"I'm dying Allie," Deana gently said again.

Allie was still quiet, but her heart was racing.

"Allie, I'm dying and I want to share a few things with you," Deana responded.

"Why are you saying that?" Allie said as her lip began to quiver.

"I'm dying Allie and I want you to walk with me on this journey," Deana beckoned.

"Stop saying these things!" Allie said as her eyes widened, her eyebrows lifted, and her hands trembled. Allie feared death: that completely foreign concept. She was uncomfortable with the topic, and fear had paralyzed Allie's ability to listen.

Deana responded gently. "Allie..."

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Allie was now sobbing with her head down and elbows on her knees. "...I love you..." she softly mumbled.

There is so much power in a question

Nadine let's out a sigh of empathy in response to my story about my love for a friend. She is still sitting beside me on the couch, leaning towards me with her shoulders slightly rounded forward. There is silence in the room except for the ticking of the clock and the classical music still coming from the radio in the kitchen.

"It is amazing," I finally say. "It is amazing the questions and the life lessons that lie within our experiences." I form a small and gentle smile at the edges of my mouth as I look outside through the living room window. "I mean they are sitting right there and we may never hear or see them. It wasn't until I heard a social worker speak about palliative care that I found myself revisiting that day with Deana. I needed to revisit that day. I needed to revisit that day because I hadn't heard the questions and the lessons that presented themselves.

"What did the social worker talk about? Nadine asks.

"Well, she began by introducing herself, and then I remember she said that one of the gifts at her hospital was that they had a palliative care unit. The social worker had said that she had learned from the dying and that they were some of her best teachers. She then asked, 'Well, what have they taught me?'"

"The social worker said that they had taught her that one day she will die." I say. "They taught her it's not such a bad process. They taught her, and she said this

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was a hard lesson for her, being the independent person that she was. That to be cared for is really a blessing, and sometimes in that blessing there are gifts. The social worker excused her own use of the word gifts. It's not supposed to come up in healthcare you know, but she said that there are gifts of love that you receive. She said, let me give you an example of this from a story a nurse told me."

"This older fellow came in from the bush, one of these old bachelors that had been in the bush for sixty years. He hadn't seen many women in sixty years. He's ninety-three years old. He came in to see the doctor and the doctor makes a diagnosis. Not only is the man dying of cancer but he's in such bad condition that he can't go back to his own shack. The man was placed in palliative care. When the nursing staff tried to care for him he was like a frightened lamb. All of these women wandering in and out of his room and it was all women. In one way it was pathetic, but in another way it was priceless."

"The nurse said that she barged into his room one day and he pulled the cover over his head. She waited till he kind of peeked back out and she said 'Did I scare you?' He nodded. The nurse said, 'Would it help if I knocked before I came into your room?' The guy nodded again. She said 'Would you like everybody to knock before they come into your room?' He nodded again. She went out to get a piece of paper and wrote in big ink 'Please do not enter this room without knocking and being invited in.' The nurse said 'Is that o.k.?' He said 'Yah, that would be really helpful.' She went out. The nurse taped the sign on the door and closed the door, then knocked."

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“Oh, I forgot one other piece of the puzzle,” I say to Nadine as I fill her water cup.

“Before the nurse left, before she closed the door, she turned and said ‘Now remember I’m your nurse, and I’ve got to look after you. When I knock on the door I expect you to let me in because I have to look after you.’ She knocked and there was no answer. Now she was in a quandary. ‘*Do I bust in on him?*’ She knocked again and there was no answer. The nurse decided she would go and do some other work for ten or fifteen minutes and then go back.”

“The nurse knocked on the door and this little voice said ‘Come in.’ She walked in and she went over to the bedside. The guy had a little grin on his face. She said to him ‘Thank you for letting me in but you know I knocked fifteen minutes ago. And I told you that I have to care for you, but you didn’t let me in. What were you doing?’ He said ‘I wanted to see if you’d obey your own sign.’

“They were like that (Allie crosses her index and middle fingers) from that moment forth. He didn’t have any family, and he didn’t have a bunch of friends that would come out of the bush and visit him. Once in a while there would be one of those old cronies that would come in. But that nurse became his buddy.”

I look out my living room window for a moment before continuing the story, because a downy woodpecker has landed on my lawn and caught my attention.

“The social worker said that the palliative care staff is always looking for ways to help people, to work with them, to support them, to do whatever they can, to be there for them. That means you have to listen. That

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means you've got to learn from your patients because one's going to be very private, one's going to be very public, one needs family, one needs quiet time. I mean, what do you do with somebody who's got Lou Gehrig's disease and is now at the stage where they literally can only communicate by blinking one eye. Well, that's their method of communicating. So, you've got to find ways of listening, of listening to them. We need to work with them in such a way that they can find those gifts that are part of their process."

"You really have to pay attention to what people are going through. You have to pay attention to what the husband needs, what the wife needs, you've got to watch the children. Children will be very different whether they're adult children, teenage children, or little children. Now, the other thing you have to remember is that none of them have ever died before. They don't have any experience with this. It's a learning experience every step of the way for each of the ones that are dying, for their families, for their friends. Every dying experience is unique. So we're constantly people that are learning."

Nadine also notices the woodpecker on my lawn. I wait until she has had a moment to watch before continuing to talk.

"What the social worker said is that she tries to get across to her patients that dying is a journey that they've never been on before, so enjoy it. Now that's the wrong word because enjoy is not what you do when you're dying. But it is a journey in which you will find a lot of things out about yourself that you have never thought about before. The social worker

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told a story a nurse had shared with her to provide an example.”

“A forty-two year old man had come in for exploratory surgery. They don’t do that very often but this was a guy they were really puzzled about. His x-rays were very unclear. This is going back ten, twelve years. So they opened up his abdomen. When they opened him up he was absolutely full of cancer. It was the kind of cancer that spreads so quickly it didn’t even show up in the x-rays. They knew he was dying, and they knew there was nothing they could do about it. The surgeons sewed him back up, waited until he came out of the anesthesia, and then the doctor told the patient that he didn’t think he had more than two maybe three weeks to live.”

“What happened was this guy went absolutely ballistic, he was furious. Of course he had to stay in the hospital because of his surgery. He was in a private room, and when the nurses would come into his room he would yell at them. The dietician would come in and put the food on the little table, and he would sweep it off onto the floor. His family would come in, and he would yell at them. This went on for several days.”

“One late afternoon the nurse and the man’s sixteen year old daughter came at the same time to the door, and the nurse said in her own funny little way; ‘I don’t think he knew who to yell at, so he was quiet.’ The nurse said that was her opportunity. She said ‘What right do you have to be so angry, to push everybody away, to yell at them, to yell at everyone that comes in here. Everybody is trying to care for you and you push them away.’ In great bitterness he said ‘I should be angry, I’ve got two weeks to live. Forty-two years old’

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he said. 'I spent my whole life building up my, my world so I would reach a point where I could retire and I could be, I could be at peace. I could spend time with my family.' At that point his daughter, who hadn't said a word, looked at him and said, 'Well, why would you want to do that, we hardly spent much time together when you weren't sick?' That was the moment of conversion for that man."

"When the man died two weeks later, the day before he died he said to that same nurse, 'I want you to know that this cancer was my gift, because I spent two weeks telling my kids I love them and they know it's true. I spent two weeks telling my wife how much I needed her forgiveness and she gave it to me. I spent two weeks finding out I was loved.'"

"Then he died."

"The wife came to speak to the nurse and simply said 'I want you to know as hard as this was to watch him go down hill, to watch him die, I want you to know what a precious gift this was.'"

Nadine lets out a big sigh and looks up to the ceiling with her eyes. I give Nadine a minute to ponder whatever thoughts or feelings my story has evoked. And then I continue.

"The social worker said that one of the things that's really important in palliative care is to watch how people start to focus on relationships, because the most important thing you take with you to the grave is really your loves. Palliative care is one of the most human areas of our lives, and I mean that in the most profound sense. It's where we have to face our mortality, we have to face our weakness, we have to face the fact that time is running out, and we have to do that in the

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context of our loved ones. Occasionally we get people who want to close the door. But for the most part it's the awareness that our family is really where we have found love and where there is love. And that's often despite some very, very serious hurts."

"Now, not everybody sorts things out. Not everybody goes through a nice process. Not everybody comes to some beautiful conclusion. Sometimes there's just a glimmer of an insight. Sometimes there's nothing. Everybody goes through their own pattern and most people haven't lived their dying the way in fact they have lived their life. But there are extraordinary things that happen. To me, the social worker said, one of the great gifts of this is to realize that the dying become our teachers."

You can see little tears building up in Nadine's eyes.

We both take a moment to watch the woodpecker's movements on the grass. Its movements are slightly foreign: the meticulous injections of the woodpecker's beak into the ground, and the sharp pauses in between each peck. After watching for a few minutes the woodpecker's movements become more familiar, and do not hold my attention.

"Yes." I say. "I did not really hear the questions and life lessons that were evoked when Deana was dying. I didn't hear the question, what does listening mean? What would it be like to go into every experience as learners because each experience is new, un-traveled, just like death and dying? What would it be like to live without time ticking away at us, that psychologically time does not exist because maybe there is no tomorrow? What relationships begin to develop when I allow myself to listen and to observe?"

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That is, what relationships begin to develop with myself, others, and the world? I'm sure I still have a lot more to learn. Does that make sense?"

"Hmm." Nadine says. "Not that I can say that I completely understand what you are saying, but I can start to see these questions and lessons in my life. When I think about yoga, now I can see that it's just gently waiting for me to say: hmm, what does listening mean in yoga? As I return again and again to my yoga mat I begin to see all of the wonders that unravel on my mat. Let me give you an example," Nadine says.

"I remember being in yoga class one day." Nadine remarks. "We had been going through a few of the poses. We came to Supta Baddha Konasana. We placed one foam block under each upper thigh at the outer aspect of the thigh, and one foam block underneath the feet. We were beginning to settle into our breathing and body. I felt relaxed, centered, and calm. The teacher came over and asked if she could put a slant board underneath one of my thighs to give that side a little more height and support. She placed the slant board under the thigh that was closer to the ground. I think I gave her a look that said 'Huh?' because she explained that either one of my hips was more open than the other, perhaps my pelvis was in a slightly asymmetrical position at rest, or some combination of things. The teacher put the slant board under one thigh so that the body could rest with balance and symmetry, as well as to provide opportunity for the tighter side to catch up to the looser side. I did not feel this asymmetry in my body."

"I bring this story up because I think it asks me what does listening mean in yoga? I mean, what is my body

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doing, and what does my body need at this moment? This experience, the cues the teacher provided in yoga, helped spark the listening that began within.”

Nadine adjusts her sitting position on the couch to one that is very upright. I take this opportunity to have a sip of my water.

“When I say listening or hearing, I’m probably talking about seeing, feeling, listening... all of it.” Nadine says. “I don’t just mean listening with the ears or seeing with the eyes. I mean listening and seeing both inwardly and outwardly. Can I hear and see everything? The sounds outside of me, my reactions to what someone says, the chatter of my mind, the voice of my heart, what my pelvis is saying, and on and on. Listening to everything so there is no control from myself. So there is no effort from myself to listen in a certain way or to certain things. It is effortless. I am listening from a place that is quiet. Listening becomes our teacher, so we are constantly learning from everything.”

We both smile kindly at each other and take a deep breath.

“What happened after your flare-up with Deana?” Nadine asks. “You know, after Deana had yelled at you for not listening to her decision to end treatments and surgery?”

Nadine is waiting eagerly for me to continue my story. So I do.

It was one day before the end of Allie’s and Deana’s grade ten year, and Deana was lying on her bed making her last attempts at life - with Allie by her side. The overhead lights were on,

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buzzing away, but this was dulled by the room's contents. The room was filled with family and heartache. All Allie could see and feel though was Deana. Allie watched as Deana shuddered for breath. It was almost unbearable for Allie to watch as she too struggled to breathe through the tears and the contractions of her body. However, as Allie held Deana in her arms, she caressed Deana's body tenderly. Allie's caresses were her last attempts to comfort and support a friend. Allie felt every stroke, every bone and naked piece of skin, every hair her hand stroked, and a faint heart beat. Allie just wanted this to be over.

Deana laid peacefully in Allie's arms: no strain in her body or on her face, she was resting. Allie caressed Deana's body one last time and kissed her cheek.

Allie left Deana's body there for her parents and relatives. All of Allie's emotions just fuelled her to keep walking: out of Deana's room, out of her house, and onto the streets to the river. Allie's walk became a run, a race to reach the river. She needed to get to the river. It was urgent. She ran three blocks in the misty rain, and as she approached the third block she could see the river from the top of the hill. The sky was gray and dense with condensation. The wind was fierce, stealing the breath out of Allie's lungs. Allie tried to keep looking ahead, but the raindrops forced her glance downward to the wet muddy sidewalks. The rain came in swirls as Allie continued to run. Allie remained focused; she knew she must reach the river. Allie needed to calm the fire within her

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body, the burning and aching of her heart. However each emotion, each memory, and each tear stoked the fire. The tears on her face melted with the raindrops on her hot cheeks. Allie kept running.

When Allie reached the river she slowed to a walk. The wind calmed and became a soothing breeze. The light wind caressed Allie's face and hair as she walked. She felt a slight sense of calm from being with the river, from the cool mist on her face, and from the walking. The rhythm of her walking was like a small boat on the open, calm ocean, where the rolling of the boat lulled the passengers to sleep. Allie almost felt like she was floating. The river seemed to flow as softly and easily as Allie's walking rhythm. The mist and fog in the air made her surroundings feel dreamlike. But Allie was not asleep.

Allie watched the view around her; it was hard for her to admit that it was beautiful. The trees, grass, and bushes on either side of the riverbanks were glistening green from the rain, and they perfumed the air with the smells of pine, soil, and dew. It was intoxicating. She could not stop gazing and admiring her surroundings. Her head acted like a video camera panning the horizon. A smile graced the face of Allie. "*It was beautiful.*" The trees, soil, leaves, rocks, and grass all glowed and became one color brighter to its natural presentation: the leaves the color of algae in water with the sun shining through, the soil as rich as dark chocolate chunks, and the rocks became the

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colors of red brick, white soap stone, and black cooled lava.

Now the only thing fueling Allie's tears and heart was the gratitude for such beauty. She did not want to leave this feeling, so she kept walking.

The water held by the grass soaked Allie's feet and legs as she tramped through her surroundings. Her body was showered and enlivened by the light misty rain. Allie almost felt like she was swimming. The puddles throughout the fields deepened and formed small lakes. Like fish jumping from a lake, the puddles continuously jumped from the beating of raindrops. As Allie walked, the trees welcomed her at each point, and the wind ruffled each leaf sending a brigade of percussion that only Allie was a witness to. The soft rolling of Allie's walking rhythm carried her through field upon field. The river left her side. The city came back into view and Allie was abruptly met with pavement.

Allie's walking rhythm had changed to a sharp mechanical motion.

Allie walked until all familiar trees, houses, and smells were gone. The peacefulness that the beautiful surroundings had brought had faded away. Allie started to tremble. She realized she did not know where she was. The houses were strangers, the trees were unfamiliar, the wind again became unforgiving. The rain started to drop like pellets. Allie was getting scared. "*Where was she? Where were her parents? Where was her school? Where was her house? Where was Deana?*" Allie's mind started to race with the

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remembrance that Deana was gone. She thought to herself *“Deana is gone now, and what happens when my parents are gone, my teachers, my school, my ability to walk, my home? What happens when they’re all gone? Who will I be when they are all gone? Who am I, if Deana is gone?”*

The tears began to flow again from the inner and outer edges of Allie’s eyes. Her lip quivered and her thoughts circulated. *“Who am I? Who am I when my friendships and relationships change? Will I see these changes? Or will they just pass me by? Will I kick and scream, resisting any change?”*

Allie went into the nearest bus stop enclosure and sat on the bench to wait for the next bus. She hoped that the bus driver would see her in the enclosure while the rain continued to fall. Allie was drenched and cold, but she did not notice this because she was going over and over her past thoughts. *‘Who am I? Who am I? How will I find out who I am?’*

Allie was jolted out of her thoughts when she heard the rumbling of the bus nearing. She went to the edge of the bus enclosure and cried for it to stop. The bus pulled up alongside Allie, and opened its doors. The bus driver sat and stared at Allie with an uncertain look. Allie stared back timidly.

“Come on,” the bus driver said.

So Allie quickly jumped into the bus where she was greeted with a pat on the head.

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"Wow, you must have had one hell of a day," the bus driver said. Allie just looked down at her feet. The bus driver looked at Allie with a kind smile. "Go on. Sit down and get dry. You look frozen. I'll let you off when it stops raining." Allie took the seat behind the bus driver and waited. She stared out the window as the scenery continued to change, and the rain continued to fall.

Allie was startled when a man sat down next to her. She had not heard the man get on the bus because she was lost in her thoughts. Allie saw an older fellow. He had a large nose, wrinkly cheeks, gray hairs coming out from all directions, and large hands. Allie saw his large hands approaching her body so she slid further away from him.

"Oh, oops" he said in the kindest and most gentle voice. "I scared you, didn't I?"

Allie looked up at this man with uncertainty. He sounded kind and trustworthy. Maybe she would speak to him. Allie talked a bit about how she was tired, her long day, and she apologized for not wanting to socialize. She was sure he would understand.

"Oh, you seem to need a little love, don't you?" He said.

The older man didn't seem to understand at all or wasn't listening to Allie. Allie was quite upset at this point so she began telling him that she wanted to be alone.

"Oh, you really are upset aren't you? You need a little heart to heart, don't you?" he said.

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"Holly shit, this guy can't hear me at all," Allie thought. She was getting annoyed. What would Allie have to do to get her message across?

"Oh, come here sweetie. Something terrible must have happened." He said kindly.

There was nothing Allie could do as the man had already scooped her up and nestled her in his arms. Allie was sitting in the older man's lap, and was being rubbed and petted in every direction. Allie wanted to break free from the man's arms. She wanted to be alone, but she couldn't help but feel some comfort from the man's soft caresses. Allie was somewhat used to being cuddled and caressed. Her mother and father were affectionate people. They looked for cuddles and kisses when the opportunities arose. Allie yearned for this affection, this tenderness. The older man's hands reminded her of her father's hands: so kind, so gentle, and so masculine. Allie knew that she was enjoying the affection that the older man provided her.

The bus came to a stop and opened its doors. The rain had stopped, the winds were calm, and it was now later in the evening. Allie quietly left the bus, the bus driver, and the older man. She had received everything they could give her. It was now time to find her way home.

Allie walked down the unfamiliar streets, and as she walked she became more and more doubtful. How would she ever find her way home? Who could she ask for help? After walking for three hours, Allie went into an alley. She was tired and needed to rest. Allie also needed to get away from

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the endless streets that were leading her in the
direction of confusion.

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CHAPTER 4

HOW DO WE EXPLORE A QUESTION?

When Allie entered the alley she found the back of a building's wall to rest against. She took a deep breath and made herself comfortable on the concrete ground. Her face was expressionless as she stared into the alley.

"Life is a funny place when there is no laughter, is it not?" A voice sounded.

"What? Who's that?" Allie had not seen anyone when she entered the alley. Actually, now that she was looking around, she realized that she did not see where she was sitting. There was a pool of dirty water beside Allie, and next to that an overflowing dumpster. It smelled like no other smell Allie had ever smelled. The floor was cold, the building was cold, and Allie was shivering. All Allie could see was dark shadows from the buildings and the dumpsters. Then the voice appeared: a round, mischievous looking form with a little pink nose and grey hair. Its little legs quickly tiptoed along.

"Who are you?" Allie asked.

In a Spanish accent he replied, "My name is Antonio Sandori Alexandro. I am at your service. Truth and freedom is my adventure, and no man or woman can map this path for me."

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"Oh...I see," Allie replied as her eyebrows lifted, her nose clenched slightly, and a small soft grin appeared.

"But you can call me Tony," he replied. "And what is your name?"

"Allie Carter."

In a low and muffled voice, intended almost for him alone, Tony responded inquisitively, "Snooty Sandy, yes, she liked to be called Snooty Sandy."

Allie was terrified at what Tony had said. Her cheeks were flushed red with warmth. '*How could he know?*' Allie thought.

"Are you related to Sandra Carter?" he asked gently.

Again, Allie's cheeks flushed with intense shame, and her heart pounded nervously. '*He knows my mother*', Allie thought. '*Oh no, this is horribly humiliating*'.

Allie knew her mother. Her mother was sneaky and snooty. Allie was ashamed of these characteristics that her mother so graciously entertained. Her mother was not ashamed of her snootiness. Allie could not understand why.

At a young age, Allie vowed never to be snooty like her mother, but as Allie matured she feared she too would become snooty. Snooty like her mother, her father, her grandmother; and now, even her friends were developing this characteristic.

At every opportunity, Allie had resisted the temptation to say something snooty or of looking snooty, but this was becoming more difficult. She wished she could be more friendly and selfless like

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man's best friend. Again, this thought made Allie blush. Allie hoped that Tony did not know anything more about her mother than her snootiness.

"Sandra Carter is my mother," Allied replied hesitantly. "How do you know her?"

"We went to high school together. I only knew her a little," Tony said kindly. Tony had decided not to enter into the subject of Allie's mother, as he had watched the volcanic like gushing action of Allie's cheeks. He sensed her uncomfortable body language and racing thoughts. He knew this fragile subject would be attended to eventually.

"What are you?" Allie asked quickly.

Tony smiled and chuckled. "Some people would define me as, what do they say... an explorer. Would they not?" He replied.

"What's an explorer?" Allie asked.

"An explorer is one who never stops and says 'I know', do they not?" He replied gently. "It is one who sets out on the quest, and yet no quest, for the ultimate freedom. One who is continuously learning."

"No you're not," Allie accusingly said. "You're just an overweight old raccoon."

The raccoon smiled at Allie. He replied in a Spanish accent with a double pump of his eyebrows. "At least I am not a cat!"

"Am not!" Allie quickly denied.

The few seconds of silence between Allie and the raccoon felt like an hour. 'He might as well have called me a snob with a pink nose!' Allie angrily thought to herself. 'He might as well have called

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me a selfish princess! Or a bitch with nails! How rude that raccoon is. Who is he to tell me who I am? Who is he to tell me that I'm snooty?'

Allie's cheeks had flushed in response to her last thought. She knew she could not hide this characteristic. Unconsciously, Allie knew that it was inevitable that one day she would be snooty.

"So what brings you here even though it seems you are not really here?" Tony asked to probe further.

This sounded strange but Allie replied. "I, I just wanted to get away for a while... so I ended up here, you know. Well, I don't know... I'm a bit confused."

"When you hear your confusion you are no longer confused." He replied with care. Do you understand this? Do you hear this?

"Umm yah... O.K." Allie said while thinking that this conversation was slightly weird. She felt awkward and it made her want to leave. Allie wanted to get out of this strange, smelly, dark place but she stayed. There was something about this raccoon that made her stay. He asked a lot of questions, and Allie could hear him listening when she spoke and when he spoke. She was curious.

"Can you hear not only the sounds of the words and their meaning, but also your reactions to what is said?" He asked. "Do you understand? Do you hear this?"

"I don't understand what you are asking." Allie said.

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“What is it you are trying to understand?” He asked kindly.

“This doesn’t make sense.” Allie said sharply. “I don’t understand.”

“You say you don’t understand, but what do you mean?” the raccoon replied. “You don’t understand because thought has tried to figure something out and it has not found an answer. You say ‘I don’t understand’ because you think that thought should know the answer. So you wait. You don’t know what to do. You are waiting for an answer. You are expecting something. You think someone can tell you. Do you hear this? You don’t understand because what you know compared to what I have said, to you, does not confirm or disconfirm your own beliefs, ideas, or thoughts. What do we mean when we say I don’t know, I really don’t know?”

“What?” Allie said even sharper than the last.

“What if I were to say Bippidi Boppidi Boop?” he asked graciously.

“Now that, that doesn’t mean anything! You’re just talking nonsense.” Allie stated while rolling her eyes and throwing her hands up into the air as if conceding.

“So you are looking for meaning.” The raccoon replied. “Thought wants to find something, thought wants to find an answer to help him or herself, so thought continues to look for meaning. Do you hear this?”

“What?” Allie said while she thought *“What the heck is up with this raccoon! Why can’t I get a straight answer?”*

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“Do you hear not only what is said, the sounds of the words and their meaning, but also your reactions? Do you hear all of this?” he asked.

“Ummmm....” Allie muttered.

“Please do not answer me, do look into this because we always say we know.” He remarked most graciously.

Allie was getting a headache from the conversation and the confusion that came with the conversation. So she closed her eyes for a moment to find a bit of peace. When she opened her eyes she found she was alone.

The SPCA picked up Allie before she could find her way home, but she had a short stay, because her family had picked her up as soon as they were notified that Allie had been found. That night Allie slept soundly, and as night became day, Allie awoke to her last day of grade ten.

I don't know

It was the last day of grade ten before summer break started. Allie sat down at her school desk and listened to each of the students' poems. The students were sharing their poems expressing an experience where they had learned something. Some poems gave Allie images of gardens, rivers, and nature while other poems talked about family, friends, and different life experiences. Ms. Sharon, Mrs. Goulet's replacement, led the class order of who would present. She was a nice lady, prim and proper, good manners.

“All right Allie, it's your turn.” Ms. Sharon said.

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Allie walked up to the front of the classroom with her poem. She sat down on the edge of Ms. Sharon's desk facing the class. Allie would share her poem for all to hear and for all to see.

"Before I visited the SPCA,
I knew that there were many animals in need of homes

But... I didn't understand how many animals do find a home, how strenuous the SPCA experience can be for animals, the frequent episodes of diarrhoea, the great volume of barking, not wanting to go back into their cage, how long the stay could be, and how many employees and volunteers are needed to operate the facility each day

Before my last relationship,
I knew that during break-ups people cried, were sad, were sometimes angry, and break-ups were hard to get over

But... I didn't understand the beauty of being able to feel all of these "negative" emotions, because it meant that I was also capable of feeling love

Before I had my first experience with death and dying,
I knew that people died and people grieved

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But... I didn't understand the aching of my heart,
what selflessness was each day of care, that I
could see life one moment and none the next, the
peace which death brings, and what a gift each
breath is

Before I met my best friend,
I knew that people lived and people died

But... I didn't understand that the person beside
me could have been a little girl who once feared
dying alone, saw patients die beside her, watched
family and friends stand by and feel helpless; and
in the act of sharing her journey of dying, had
given her best friend a gift, a gift of eternal love

I knew...
But... I didn't understand..."

There was silence after Allie had finished
reading. And then one girl at the front of the
classroom put up her hand. Allie looked at Ms.
Sharon to see if she would respond.

"Go ahead Allie." She said.

"Yes Paula." Allie said.

"I don't know if I understand your poem. Could
you explain it to me?" Paula asked.

At first Allie had this urge to explain the poem.
She knew that she was asked a question and in
order to be helpful and polite one should answer.
Allie heard this. And so she replied. "I'm not sure
if I can Paula. I guess not in the sense where I say
something and then you understand. I think to

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understand each subject in this poem, entirely, will take more than a lifetime.”

“But, but then how will you or I ever completely understand.” asked Paula.

“Exactly.” Allie said. There was a short silence after Allie’s response. “Look, all I can say to start your journey is: What would your poem look like? What do you think you know? Do you have the courage to say, maybe I don’t know and I will just see what happens when I allow myself to listen, to see, to say I don’t know. I mean to say ‘I really don’t know’. Not, ‘I don’t know but I think someone can tell me the answer’. I mean ‘I really don’t know’. Your teacher can’t tell you, and your mother can’t tell you because we don’t know.”

“I’m not sure if I understand, Allie?” said Paula with a confused look on her face.

Allie saw that Paula continued to look confused because she did not get the answer she had wanted, and that was O.K. In reaction to this observation, a smile formed on Allie’s lips and entire being. Allie knew that she could continue to help spark Paula’s journey of continuous learning.

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EPILOGUE

As I look around my living room, I notice its almost unchanged environment. It is like I remember it as a young girl. The couches are still comfortable and wonderful for naps. The room still sings with classical music coming from the kitchen, and the air is warm from the heavenly sun. The energy of this house is filled with memories of struggles and loves.

Every time I return to my living room, I catch a glimpse of who I am. I get the opportunity to listen and observe. My living room, almost unchanged, affords me a look at my constantly growing and changing self.

My thoughts are interrupted by laughter that has erupted in my kitchen. The people, who think that they are my owners, and our dog Molly, are playing in the kitchen. I can hear Molly's fingernails tapping on the kitchen's hardwood floor in excitement.

Molly is a black standard poodle. She prances like a pony and sports the worst perm a girl could have. But, Molly's big brown eyes are those of a cute and cuddly four-year-old boy. She is terribly gullible and indulgent.

Nadine and I look at each other and smile in response to the sounds coming from the kitchen. It is as though we can read each other's minds. We are laughing at Molly. We can see her now, fully engaged in a game of tug-of-war with her chew toy.

Molly allows herself to be swept like a broom across the kitchen floor by her owners. Molly's belly drags across the floor, and her neck is whip lashed from side-

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to-side. She will not let go of that dirty, slobbery chew toy.

Nadine and I know this is our chance to be sneaky.

“Who’s going to steal Molly’s food this time?”

Nadine asks.

“I will,” I reply while laughing.

“You’re so bad, sneaky, and snooty,” Nadine wittily says.

“Yah... you’ve got to love it,” I reply.

Nadine and I sneak to the kitchen to steal Molly’s food. We will hide the food in the basement so Molly will be occupied for days in pursuit. This will ensure that Molly’s antics of jumping from living room couch to living room couch in the excitement of seeing her owners return home will be stopped. Her frizzy body will not shake the couches as I try to nap.

Peace will return to my living room. The living room will once again be quiet for conversations among friends.

3.2 DISCUSSION

3.2.1 Mindful Inquiry

Why is it important to live mindfully? Mindfulness develops the energy of awareness, and with awareness, such things as love, being present, learning, listening, and compassion are possible (Kabbat-Zinn, 1994; Krishnamurti, 1999; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2004). The women in this study communicated that they learned about continuous learning, listening, and compassion from the yoga/meditation/mindfulness program. Or, I could say that the women's mindful inquiry looked like continuous learning, listening, and compassion; which would be consistent with the language from this study's research question: How do middle-aged women yoga students inquire while participating in a mindfulness program?

Throughout the next couple of pages, I have chosen to talk about the women's mindful inquiry, but not all inquiry. I have made this choice because I want to focus on contextualizing mindful inquiry in the literature. Note, that the fictional story represents how the women inquired in the mindfulness program, whereas, the chapter titles represented the women's mindful inquiry. The sub themes of each chapter depicted the nuances of each theme. Chapter one was titled: "Everybody has a Story", and its sub themes were "How we became friends" and "What is the importance of friendship, laughter, and trust?" Chapter two was titled: "The Oneness of Learning, Listening, and Compassion". Chapter three was titled: "Who's Listening?", and its sub theme was "There is so much power in a question". Chapter 4 was titled: "How do we Explore a Question?" and its sub theme was "I don't know".

3.2.2 Learning, Listening, and Compassion

Yogic, Buddhist, and meditation authors continually discuss the vital role of learning, listening, and compassion in mindful inquiry/meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Krishnamurti, 1964; Lasater, 2000; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2004). For example, Kabat-Zinn (1994) has discussed that thought can be like a coursing river, and “[m]editation means learning how to get out of this current, sit by its bank and listen to it, learn from it, and then use its energies to guide us rather than to tyrannize us” (p. 9). Kabat-Zinn, as well as other meditation authors such as Krishnamurti (1999), have highlighted that with meditation comes an inquiry into the activity of the self, the activity of the thinker, and the question: Who am I? This question was repeatedly shared by the women in this study in response to two questions I asked the women to explore: What does learning mean? And have you ever watched the activity of your mind?

Like Kabat-Zinn’s description of meditation provided above, researchers investigating mindfulness have suggested *similarly*, that living mindfully may decrease escape and avoidance behaviours, decrease rumination, and increase observation and acceptance skills (Hargreaves, 2001; Linehan, 1993 as cited in Baer, 2003). I emphasize, similarly, because I do not hear the ending of the me or the self; which is essential to meditation (Krishnamurti, 1999). The ending of the me has been described as the ending of the conflict between what we think “should be” and “what is” (Krishnamurti, 1999). The above changes, suggested by researchers, are hypothesized to be the effective mechanisms of mindfulness for change in emotional distress (Baer, 2003).

Mindfulness ends psychological suffering from listening to, continuous learning from, being compassionate in, and awareness of the present (Thakar, 2005). Psychological suffering can be described as the conflict between “what we think is” and

“what is” (Krishnamurti, 1999), or ignorance about one’s own nature, wanting pleasures to continue, obsession with the body, and the functioning of the ego (Thakar, 2005). Mindful inquiry and the ending of psychological suffering happen simultaneously, they are connected; in essence they mean the same thing.

In the fictional story in this thesis, there were numerous examples of psychological suffering coming to an end when Mrs. Goulet, Deana, and Allie listened to, learned from, and were compassionate in their lives. Research has suggested *similarly*. Mindfulness-based meditation has decreased such things as participants’ stress related outcomes and chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner, 1998). Again, I emphasize *similarly* because I do not hear the ending of the me, the ending of psychological suffering. I hear an outcome measure, a description of stress or chronic pain of the me, or the we, going down.

When psychological suffering ends or the ending of the me happens inside a person, there is space to embrace the present, to be compassionate (Krishnamurti, 1999). Mark Lee (the director of the Krishnamurti foundation of America), in his program feedback for this study’s mindfulness program, had described compassion as “affection from relationship in the everyday world”. Thich Nhat Hanh (2004) has said that compassion inside oneself comes from mindful breathing, deep listening, and deep looking. Mindful moment to moment attending has been said by Kabat-Zinn (2003) to include the energies of affection and compassion. He also suggested that mindful attending not only brings such things as sadness and grief into our awareness, but also allows such things as joy and happiness to be seen (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). So, whether or not we are watching the sunset, confronted with anger inside oneself, or responding to the suffering of another; dropping into the present moment, or deep relationship in the everyday world, or the

ending of the me, or deep listening, or continuous learning, or mindfulness; brings affection and compassion into our moment to moment experiences.

Seeing the possibility of compassion happening in all moment to moment experiences is somewhat different to Neff's (2003), the leading researcher in self-compassion in the context of mindfulness, definition. In Neff's definition, compassion is set within the context of, or comes when, a person is aware of the suffering of others and desires to alleviate that suffering. This type of context for compassion is consistent with the oxford dictionary's definition of compassion (askoxford.com, 2006). Although Thich Nhat Hanh (2004) did not contextualize compassion this way in his book, "Peace in every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life", many of his examples of compassion take place with hearing and transforming the suffering of others.

Seeing compassion as taking place only when there is the ending of the me is somewhat different to how compassion has been described by Neff (2003). Neff suggested that compassion was related to and can include a *self*-compassion. She is suggesting that there can be compassion when the self is functioning. As well, because Neff suggested that mindfulness is a component of self-compassion, she is also suggesting that there can be meditation/mindfulness when the self is functioning. It was not clear whether or not the self was functioning in Neff's general definition of compassion. To clarify, I am not trying to state that she is right or wrong on any subject; rather, this is an opportunity for inquiry, listening, and learning. I would have liked Neff to engage in an inquiry into the meaning of the self, the function of the self, and the meaning of compassion, so that we can continue to learn together.

3.2.3 Stories, Friendship, and Trust

A group format in mindfulness-based meditation interventions has been deemed an important element of a successful program and optimal learning environment (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). The women in this study communicated how important their stories, friendship, and trust was for sharing, learning, listening, and compassion. One woman in this study said that she thought it was remarkable how open they were with each other. She suggested that the trust the women felt between each other immediately in the mindfulness program was due to their previous practice of yoga together. In her book, *Living your Yoga*, Judith Lasater (2000) suggested similarly, that one way to find connection with oneself or others is to take a yoga class. In response to the yoga sutra in book one verse thirty-three, Iyengar (2005) reminded us that friendliness in relationships, with others and within, is a vital quality for yoga students. Trust, as Kabat-Zinn discussed, in oneself or in another is a crucial component of a mindfulness practice (Kabbat-Zinn, 1994). "... For if we do not trust in our ability to observe, to be open and attentive, to reflect upon experience, to grow and learn from observing and attending...we will hardly persevere in cultivating any of these abilities..." (p. 58). Trust and friendship in this study's mindfulness program created a learning environment where listening, learning, and compassion could take place.

Interestingly, the women continuously commented on how powerful just hearing each others stories were for learning. Many meditation authors share stories and poetry to spark questions about and insight into mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2005; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2004). Stories and poetry were essential learning tools in this study's mindfulness program, because they acted as bridges for the participants who were familiar with Western language but confused by the language and exploration style of

Krishnamurti or “Eastern Philosophy”. Stories and poetry provided the participants with vicarious experience of mindful inquiry, which helped to spark their own journeys into mindfulness.

I think that the fictional story included in the result section of this thesis serves the same purposes for readers. As well, I think that this story will be a helpful learning tool for mindfulness programs, especially for “Western” participants and youth. However, it will be vital for the mindfulness teacher to extract for the students the mindful inquiry it implies. Mark Lee, in his program feedback, emphasized this point for the yoga component in this study’s mindfulness program; and he provided similar feedback for almost all of the activities in the initial mindfulness program.

I chose to title each chapter of the story with a theme of mindful inquiry from this study, because I think this decision will help the readers and mindfulness teachers to extract the mindfulness the story implies. Having the chapter titles as themes of mindfulness tells the reader what is being explored. Mindfulness teachers can engage participants in additional discussions about the themes of the story to aid learning. The use of chapter titles as themes of mindful inquiry will also be beneficial for researchers reading a fictional story in research, because they are given stated meaning by the researcher and somewhat concrete findings from the study.

I chose to amalgamate the voices of the women, my own, and other meditation authors in this study’s story, because for me, this technique allowed me to utilize the participants’ insight, my own insight, and the meditation authors’ insight into mindfulness to tell the story that I thought would help aid learning. I chose to tell my readers that this story was an amalgamation of voices so that I could share with them how the story was created. I have also shared my own, and meditation teachers’,

perspectives about mindfulness so that the readers know what perspectives have guided the story/research. From all of the above information, the reader is given the opportunity to make their own conclusions about the story and generalizations to their life.

3.2.4 Questions

Continuously, questions are posed and explored throughout many works by meditation authors to spark continuous learning, listening, and compassion... insight into mindfulness (Iyengar, 2005; Kabbat-Zinn, 1994; Krishnamurti, 1999; Lasater, 2000; Thakar, 2005; Thich Nhat Hanh, 2004). It is important to spark this insight into continuous learning, listening, and compassion so that a person can enter each moment as a learner. Like Allie captured in this study's fictional story prologue, only when she was continuously learning, listening, and compassionate did she hear the questions that presented themselves in each experience. To me, Krishnamurti was sparking insight into the mind that is present, listening, continuous learning, and compassionate when he asked the question: "...What is the state of the mind that says "I really don't know"? I can't find it in any book, I can't ask anybody, I can't go to any teacher or priest, I really don't know. When the mind says "I don't know", what is the state of that mind? Please, don't answer me. Do look at it, because we always say we know...." (1973, p. 447).

3.2.5 Program Components

Mindfulness-based meditation (MBM) interventions are comprised of physical activity (Hatha yoga), meditation (sitting, walking, and daily activities), and body scans (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). This study's mindfulness program included activities such as yoga, body scans, discussions, journaling, and daily exploration activities. I was reminded in

the program feedback I received that engaging in “yoga”, “meditation”, and “body scans” does not necessarily mean that we are mindful.

Within each activity in the MBM intervention created by Kabat-Zinn (1982), a mindfulness practice is prescribed. Kabat-Zinn (2003) has emphasized that the teacher, whose teaching is based on his or her own mindfulness practice, plays a vital role in delivering an authentic mindfulness program. Krishnamurti did not prescribe any particular practice to cultivate mindfulness (Krishna, 2005); however, in his work he highlighted that the teacher helps spark insight into mindfulness so that the student can inquire on his or her own. Mark Lee suggested an identical role of the mindfulness teacher as Krishnamurti when he said to me in his program feedback, “What questions can you ask that will bring your students to the threshold of the suspension of the known at the point of knowing?” Like Krishnamurti’s work, this study’s mindfulness program was non-prescriptive. I also continually asked the participants questions so that during our exploration or their own exploration, insight into listening, compassion, and the subtleties between the known and the unknown could be sparked.

Freedom from the known is a vital component of mindful living. B.K.S. Iyengar (2005) has also said that freedom must be gained in the body and the mind. So, it is not the sitting down and the closing of one’s eyes, the physical activity, or the watching of the sunset that will necessarily spark insight into mindfulness: it is how we engage in each activity.

I would think that the MBM activities were chosen because most have been used for thousands of years to cultivate mindfulness. The Buddhist have practiced sitting and walking meditation to cultivate mindfulness for over 2500 years (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), the yogis have practiced the eight limbs of yoga for thousands of years (which includes the

essential posture component) to help free the body and the mind (Thakar, 2005), and I'm assuming it was the psychologists who developed the sweeping technique to observe the body and facilitate breath awareness and relaxation. As well, yoga and meditation cultivate emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual health (Iyengar, 2005). Knowing this, the inclusion of the above activities makes sense, especially if a program may only be 7-12 weeks in duration.

A variety of activities are necessary in a mindfulness program. They are necessary as meditation does not only happen while sitting down (Kabat-Zinn, 1982), just as yoga does not only happen on the mat (Lasater, 2000). If it did, meditation and yoga would only be a form of escape. Meditation is possible in moment to moment living. Even though this is a Kinesiology master's thesis, even though yoga has been used for thousands of years to cultivate mindfulness, and even though yoga has been a vital component of my mindfulness learning/health, I cannot deem yoga or any physical activity as a required activity in a mindfulness program or more important than another activity. For that matter, I can't say that physical activity is or isn't necessary in a mindfulness program. The benefit of mindfulness for Kinesiologists is that it allows us to sit with the unknown, to understand something completely new. So, the benefit of mindfulness for Kinesiologists is that it broadens our understanding of what movement is, how movement can be taught, and what is possible for health.

3.2.6 Continuous Inquiry, Continuous Learning

The purpose of this study was to try to spark insight into how middle-aged women yoga students inquired, while participating in a mindfulness program. As well as, the

purpose of this study was to try to spark initiative in these women, in educators, and the “reader” to explore mindful inquiry. Continuous learning was the focus of this thesis, even though I did not overtly understand this while writing my literature review and methods. To try to spark this learning I have used a variety of mediums: yoga, poetry, fictional stories, literature reviews, questions, and a mindfulness program. Throughout this discussion, I look to carry on this focus of continuous learning. I hope the following discourse inspires questions to explore, something to think on, and insight into what we mean by continuous learning.

On the first day of the mindfulness program, I asked the women what interested them about this study. The words: centering, connected, fully engaged, learning more about myself, enlightenment, quiet mind, and being right there were shared by the women to describe what they were looking for from this study. I am not sure if the women in this study attained these states or processes during the mindfulness program. However, based on such things as my own exploration into mindful inquiry and how the women responded to my last question, I do think we explored and learned about mindful inquiry, or what I would now term continuous learning. The dialogue below is the responses from the six women who attended the last session. They addressed the question: What would you most want to share with the reader of this study about your experiences in this program? To honor their voice I have provided this discussion verbatim. The women’s responses describe what they learned about mindful inquiry.

Sarah: For me, I think the whole process of just pausing for that moment in time and going inwards, trying to discover what’s in there, who’s there, what does it mean, and who am I; all that stuff, is something that is really very, very challenging. Very difficult. I found it very frustrating, very challenging. And to sit down and try to actually formulate some kind of coherent thought, to write it down, was like... I can’t tell you the number of times I was completely agitated by the whole thing, because I think that’s the

place people most probably don't want to be there. You don't want to go in there and try and figure out what's in there. You want to just be busy, do all of the stuff on the outside of yourself. You don't want to come inside, what's really important. It's time, it takes thought, it takes questioning, it takes all this stuff you've been trying to, you know, go through every time we've been together. And I find it really hard to do that, really hard.

That was my kind of thought about it, how, like I said lots of times I didn't want to come back. My husband said to me (in her husband voice) "I would have been out of there the first day" (laughing). (Every one laughs). "I would have stood my ground". (Everyone is still laughing). You know, men eh? (Everyone is still laughing).

Risa: (talking to Sarah) You have really visited what you were feeling. You've learned something from...

Sarah: Yah, I... I was typing some stuff on the computer and I turned around. My husband has got his office in the house and I asked him a couple of questions. Like, have you ever sat down and tried to figure out who you are? (A little laughter from some of the women). You're this guy who works all the time.

He says "Noooo". (Sarah has a big laugh). That's all he said. "I'm busy". (Some of the women are laughing).

So, yah I found it really hard, really hard. But a couple of really neat things happened throughout the process. Kind of an understanding of in myself what would work for me. So it would be a huge journey to try and figure all that stuff out. Huge journey.

Me: Can we say now that there is a smile now on your face even though it was a struggle?

Sarah: Yah (laughing). Yah. (laughing).

Me: O.K... Thanks. Would anyone like to share anything?

Malvina: I would say I got a deeper insight in terms of how yoga works. So I know that yoga, the postures, the asanas are just one of the eight limbs of yoga and the pranayamas is another one. And this whole emphasis here in terms of the notion of creating space. And I think about, you know, in yoga how we're always lengthening the spine or working to create more space and not the contraction.

This sounds like it's going to be all over the place, but...

We also know that when we are more in our ego or head we're more contracted. And when we are more in our heart and soul we're more expanded. So it creates more space in the body. And then some of the things we were doing here was about creating space, you know, stopping the chatter, and space. And I know in the pranayama then with the in breath, inhale say, and then the slight pause, exhale, slight pause. It's those slight pauses where we're creating space. So, for me it was a huge insight in terms of how the asanas, the pranayama... we know that the asanas prepare the body for meditation and the ultimate breaking is the samadhi, the bliss state. For me, I could see more how yoga really works. It's creating space on so many levels. You know, expanded. When you go to the bliss state, the love or the bliss, that's got to be a (little laugh) hugely expanded state of oneness. So for me it just a deeper insight into how yoga works.

Me: Thank you.

Marcia: I just loved the way she expressed that (a little laugh). I was wishing I could take notes.

You know I've been spending time reading and re-reading... Krishnamurti? Is his name? ("um hm" Rachel replies). And some of it I've really had a hard time understanding, but... when you express it like that I think... yah, yah it's so much easier.

Risa: I read that passage to my husband.

Me: Which one is that one. The "I don't know" one?

Risa: Yah. He actually, he turned around and said "are you O.K.?" (some laughter from the women). He said, "did you, is that real?" And I said yah, what do you think? "Holy Christmas" he said (laughter from some of the women). But it was interesting his response. "He just went in circles," he said. "He didn't say anything." And that's what he responded.

I understand what you're saying about space, because I kind of really got into the space of the yoga the last while in a couple of the Sundays (*referring to the Sunday yoga in the mindfulness program*) when we were working with things. But, I have a tendency to hold a lot inside and as a result I protect myself. I protect my heart a lot. As a result I have trouble with opening. There are many things going on in my pelvis and opening. Being aware, the mindfulness of where I was at different times really made me start to understand how I get so into regressing, and moving away, and protecting myself. I became really aware of where I was, or what I was doing, or how heavy I was into thinking about something, or analyzing something, or worried about something, or "agendaing", or "agendacizing". That's my word (little laugh). I don't know if that's a real word or not, but I do that. Just flicking things off in my mind and re-writing lists. It really made me look at where I am, and what I'm doing. And when I've chosen to do something not regret it, just be happy with it and just do it. And... things started to change in the last weeks. It did. So it's made me visit myself on a different level.

Me: Thank you.

Jennifer: I keep going back to something Aneeta said one day about we're all looking for our sacred space. Remember when she said that? It kind of resonated with me. I have brought that to yoga and I have tried to ponder that. I often find that because of the discussions in the group, I'm very intrigued by this group of women. You know about hearing more about your stories and realizing that everything that keep people, the stories that people bring and leave at the door in the yoga room, trying to get past what's happened in your lives. Not get passed. That's the wrong word. But integrate that, and still be able to be here now, and overcome so many things that have happened. I just think it's been a profound sharing. And in that sharing we get to what Aneeta described so perfectly is the sacred space. Because its individual, but in this setting its been kind of a communal sharing.

I would say to your reader that it's remarkable that we were all so open. And I think its because we come in here, we didn't know each other very well, but we came. We do come in here almost everyday (*for yoga*) and we share that time. And there's something about that communion of experience that I think enabled us to open up to each other. And it was quite profound and beautiful. So.. that's what I got from it.

Nadeen: Well, I agree so much with each of who have spoken and just think of your comment about the group. As I have reviewed my notes, every time it's appreciation for the group and the way I felt so much honor and respect for everyone in the group. I had one sentence in there that said "Oh the ripeness of these souls." I thought isn't that such a good way to think of us as we come so full into ourselves. And I liked that idea. And I think what I might offer to the reader as an addition to these other comments, I think that there were two phrases that really come to my mind and one is "Letting go". I find such a wonderful thing, when I was doing yoga, and the instructor says "when thoughts come into your mind observe them, release them, and let them go." And I love that. And when the instructor says that, I feel so affirmed, and I love that idea of observing and letting go.

Then the other one is how I feel so appreciative of being made aware of being in the moment. When I think of my procedure of those three meals of eating my bran cereal, of being in the moment for those, I think now those were meals that I remember. They were significant to me. And I don't know if I ate anything else the rest of the week, because I don't remember anything else.

So I'm thinking now maybe this is, this has just occurred to me and it's a question that I've so often wondered about. Is that when you're a little child you have these big long afternoons. You know, you've got a summer afternoon to play and it goes on and on and on. There's lots of time. And then when you get older you say "I don't know where the week went" or "its April we have to do taxes again." And I say "Ohh I just did that!" And the time just seems to be going by so fast and I want to hold on to it and say, "don't go so fast". So, I'm thinking that maybe the clue to this is being in the moment. And so I thought well, maybe when you get older your just living the list of the agenda. Going over and over in your mind the future and the past. And its just going, turning and turning. So it doesn't matter if it's Monday or Friday, you're still living the same mental day. You're just still going like this all the time. And I'm thinking that maybe I can stop time by being in the moment. And its just I think a wonderful gift that I have been given here in these last weeks. Because I think well there is, there's the gift of time. So, that's what I was thinking was really valuable that was given from this thing.

Me: No time?

Jennifer: There's your title.

Me: Which is the title?

Jennifer: The gift of time.

Malvina: And the precious sacred moment.

Jennifer: Yes.

Malvina: The sacred moment.

Jennifer: Yep.

Malvina: *Sacred space, sacred moment.*

3.2.6.1 What I learned from the women

From listening to the women, I heard that their learning and their mindful inquiry styles were interwoven, and, that if I am going to spark insight into how the women in this study inquired, I also have to express their learning. To me, the main mindful inquiry style that seemed to be heightened for the women from the mindfulness program was listening.

The women were learning the intricacies of listening, of being there to see, to feel, and hear what unfolded moment by moment. I like the story that one woman in the program told to describe her mindful listening. “I experience it like, who is it that is listening? Sort of that witness, witness consciousness. It’s kind of like those dreams. I don’t know if you have them? I sometimes get those dreams where I’m above myself watching myself. So day-to-day I’m catching myself, whether or not I’m trying to make meaning or reacting to what someone has said.”

We must ask then, what is the importance of listening? Why was it important for the women to hear each other’s stories, to listen to their bodies, and to listen to their questions and thoughts of “maybe I can”, the “I don’t know where the week went”, the “inhale say, and then the slight pause, exhale, slight pause. It’s those slight pauses where we’re creating space”, the “who am I?”, and the “I found it very frustrating”? Why is it

important to hear not only what is outside of us, but also to hear all of the chatter of the mind? It is to learn, is it not? To spark that curiosity to inquire into whom we are.

For the women, and throughout the fictional story, there appeared to be circularity between listening and learning. Listening was key to spark learning; and when the women were learning, they were listening. But what do we mean by mindful listening and learning? Must not the “me” or the “I”, be very quiet; have infinite space so that we can listen and learn? We cannot hear what takes place moment by moment if our beliefs, desires, conclusions, and ideals are continuously interpreting and filtering what is said, what is seen. A somewhat extreme example of this would be a conversation with a friend. We might not hear the majority of sentences a friend has spoken, because we are too busy disagreeing with what was said or waiting for our turn to make a clever statement. So, the me can gain knowledge about our experiences; it can acquire beliefs, develop intricate descriptions and sound analysis to get closer and closer to the actual; but the me will always be in conflict with the actual.

And how will the mind become quiet? It is not by any effort from the me, for this brings more chatter. Do not believe me though. Try it. Must we not invite all of the chatter inside and outside of us in? To listen to and learn from everything: from the beliefs, the judgments, the questions, the conclusions, the joy, the sadness, and the opinions. If we are continuously learning from, and listening to everything, the me comes to an end. There is no attachment. There is just a tremendous sense of freedom to learn and listen without any influence, without any direction from the self. But, this does not mean there is no function for the me. I am only saying that perhaps there is a place for the me and a place for the ending of the me.

When I started my thesis, I had intended on only sparking insight into how the women in this study inquired. I hope that the fictional story included in this thesis highlighted the interconnectedness between learning and mindful inquiry/listening.

From listening to the women, I also heard compassion included in the interconnectedness, the oneness, and the circular movement between learning and listening. Examples can be found in the story. If we remember, verbally Deana showed a good understanding of all of the novels discussed in her English class; however, Deana “failed” her English test because of her poor writing skills. What was the importance of Mrs. Goulet’s listening to and learning from Deana, herself, and the world around her? Listening to and learning from the “What are Deana’s needs?”, the “What is learning?”, and the “Hey, I’m no English teacher. Deana’s the one that carried the class.” In Mrs. Goulet’s case, it allowed her to provide an opportunity for Deana to ace her English test.

I very much enjoyed Mark Lee’s words to me about compassion. In his program feedback he asked me, how will I get “closer to the real issues of compassion that come from affection from relationship in the everyday world?” Mark Lee’s insight into compassion reminded me of children and their learning; the excitement, joy, struggles, fun, and compassion that comes with learning/listening. The smile that graces the face of child after hearing a frog croak, the awe in a child’s eyes while watching an airplane fly overhead, and a child’s tender and apprehensive petting of a dog. Now, after reviewing some of the qualities of mindful inquiry for the women in this program, and after reviewing the learning focus of the mindfulness program; compassion, learning, and listening, it does not surprise me that the women became friends and continue to meet. That most of the women expressed their growing acceptance of who they are. And, it appeared that all of the women could kindly laugh at their struggles in the program.

The women struggled with Krishnamurti's work and language throughout the mindfulness program. After numerous readings I would see smirks, agitation, raised eyebrows, stunned faces, smiles, and large question marks in many of the women's eyes. Sometimes there was complete silence for a prolonged period. In reaction, I thought to myself "Is a new language needed to express Krishnamurti's work? Does the West need to develop language to discuss mindfulness? Did the mindfulness program need a longer learning progression before reading Krishnamurti's work? And what role does struggling play in the learning process or when learning something new?" I found it interesting how the women's resistance, and sometimes complete negation, of Krishnamurti's content seemed to soften after I began to use yoga type language, stories, questions, and poetry. Using these mediums developed lengthy discussions, even though minutes earlier there may have been complete silence in reaction to Krishnamurti's words.

I had my own struggles in the program. At various points, my listening/learning/compassion was distracted by a hot room, being nervous at the beginning of the program, worrying about time, the beeping of the transcriber, confusion about my role (was I the teacher, the researcher, Rachel, a participant, or all?), wants, expectations, and my "knowing". I remember the first day of the study; it was extremely hot in the room. I was sweating and getting tired from the heat. I thought, "Can the women see my sweat stains?" But this was a good learning experience for me. In the following sessions when it was hot we took water breaks, I closed the blinds in the studio, and I started the fan when we were not using the transcriber.

At the beginning of the program I was nervous, which distracted my listening. I think that this was partially due to anticipation of the program beginning, and excitement for the program. I also tend to be shy when I first meet people. Even though I had taught many of the women yoga, I still needed to develop a new relationship with the women before my nerves would settle. I think my nervousness was also connected to what I felt my new role was, the researcher. Again, these experiences were a great learning opportunity. To develop my relationship with the women as not only a researcher and teacher, but as a participant and friend, I completed each exploration task that was assigned. This allowed me to share my experiences with the group and share in the group experience. As my relationships deepened with each of the women, my nerves calmed.

Time, expectations, and wants distracted my listening. During the second session in the program, wanting to complete the entire lesson plan for an activity made me worry about how much time was left. In turn this brought deafness. Thinking I could and probably should complete the entire planned activity distracted my listening. When I felt myself trying to complete the entire planned activity, I became frustrated. I felt torn; do I continue to listen to the women's stories in response to the current question being discussed, or do I move along so that the "entire" activity will be completed? I somewhat heard the frustration nagging at me during the second session, but chose to ignore it. This frustration distracted my listening. Directly after the second session I was annoyed at myself for not listening to my frustration. This annoyance quickly turned to a smile. I had realized that the lesson plan for a session was not a "to do list" but a guide.

My “knowing” distracted my listening/learning. Throughout most of the program, I did not hear that I viewed people with a firm perspective about mindfulness topics, or those who instantly negated Krishnamurti’s work, as “bad”. For almost the entire program I was saddened by the instant negation of Krishnamurti’s work by one woman. To be clear, I was not sad because I think people should *believe* what Krishnamurti writes. Krishnamurti’s work does not ask you to follow. Like the story I told in the literature review reveals, a bit of frustration arose in my friend when she read Krishnamurti’s work because he never provided answers, only more questions to think on.

Near the end of the program when I realized my sadness due to the woman’s firm perspective on mindfulness, I explored the meaning of perspectives and the importance of perspectives. I eventually learned, heard, and felt that perspectives are not good or bad, right or wrong while engaging in a mindfulness program. It is not a question of black or white, it is a question of: can we hear and learn from our perspective? Even if a person continued to hold the same perspective, I would ask the same question. Can we listen to and learn from what we bring to each conversation, each glance, and each moment? I am grateful to this woman for sharing her perspective. She helped me see and hear the perspective that I held.

I hope that this thesis has made you think about the importance/value of continuous learning in mindfulness programs, and as a research focus. Most importantly, I hope that this research has helped sparked your own journey into mindful inquiry, so that you can find out for yourself.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 SUMMARY

Over the past twenty years the research community has had heightened interest in mindfulness-based meditation, because of its promising benefits for psychosocial illnesses. The mindfulness intervention includes activities such as Hatha Yoga and Buddhist meditation (in daily activities such as physical activity and sitting), which have been used for thousands of years to cultivate mindfulness or samadhi. Unfortunately, in the mindfulness literature the majority of studies have had methodological weaknesses. The lack of an operational definition of mindfulness and a reliable and valid mindfulness measure are seen as major weaknesses of the mindfulness literature. However, the act of operationalizing and measuring mindfulness ignores the works of some teachers/students of mindfulness that describe mindfulness as the immeasurable or indefinable. Therefore, I utilized a collective instrumental case study to try to spark insight into how a particular group of middle-aged women yoga students inquired while participating in a mindfulness program. As well, the purpose of this study was to spark initiative in these women, educators, and the “reader” to inquire into the mindfulness process.

Eight women consented to participate in this study’s mindfulness program. To represent how the women inquired during the program, I wrote a fictional novel. The story is based on the information the women shared during the program, my own insights into mindfulness, and the insights of meditation authors. The title of each chapter represents the theme(s) of the women’s’ mindful inquiry. The sub themes of each chapter depict the nuances of each theme. Chapter one was titled: “Everybody has a

Story”, and its sub themes were “How we became friends” and “What is the importance of friendship, laughter, and trust?” Chapter two was titled: “The Oneness of Learning, Listening, and Compassion”. Chapter three was titled: “Who’s Listening?”, and its sub theme was “There is so much power in a question”. Chapter 4 was titled: “How do we Explore a Question?” and its sub theme was “I don’t know”.

4.2 IMPLICATIONS

Are we all a bunch of dualists? Or more specifically, are Kinesiologists all a bunch of dualists? We may know the words holistic, integration, and connection; and emphasize their importance in health care, but I question whether or not we understand them. Labeling everybody as dualists sounds like a generalization, but ask/challenge yourself: Can, not only the mind, but also the body, heart, spirit... all of these things be aware, conscious, and intelligent? Or are awareness, consciousness, and intelligence only an activity of the mind, separate from the rest? Descartes would say that consciousness is in the mind, because all that can be certain is that we are thinking things; and therefore, we can exist without the body (Descartes as cited by Pojman, 1999). Here, the “I” thinking, or we could say the thinker, represents consciousness. Consciousness, which interacts with the brain, is separate from the body and controls the body. As Descartes would say he is lodged in his body “as a pilot in a vessel” (Pojman, 1999). The body is only the mind’s puppet to accomplish such things as increases in strength, respiratory health, or physiological health. We are fragmented, separated.

Mindfulness is a holistic way of seeing and functioning in the world. In this study’s mindfulness program, the teacher’s job is to try to spark insight into the awareness/consciousness/intelligence of the body, mind, heart, and spirit, all of us:

during talking, physical activity, all activities. When I talk about awareness, consciousness, and intelligence, I am not talking about the thinker. Here is where I see the difference between dualist and holistic seeing. Awareness is the ending of conflict between “what is” and “what we think should be,” the ending of the thinker, the observer, and the listener. Where the thinker and thought become one, and the observer and the observed become one. All there would be is thought, observation, and listening. With this then, there is no difference between you and the tree. To a dualist this would be crazy talk. When the conflict of “what is” and “what we think should be” has ended, we rest in the present moment. We are learning and listening with all of us, from a place that is quiet, and healing in that moment because there is integration/union/alignment of the mind, body, and spirit.

I would think upon hearing the word mindfulness, many people in the West, or dualists, might quickly conclude that mindfulness is only about the activity of the mind/the brain; therefore mindfulness should be studied in psychology. And then, if a Western person heard that mindfulness could be learned during yoga, that person might say: “Oh, that’s why it’s Kinesiology, right?” Further, if a western person heard that it’s not necessarily the physical activity that allows mindfulness to take place, it’s about how we engage in the activity. That person might then say: is physical activity really necessary in mindfulness programs or could we just take it out? Coming full circle back to a psychology study. In contrast to the West, in many Asian cultures the word mind is both the heart and the mind (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Mindfulness is about continuous learning. Mindfulness can be studied in Kinesiology because of Kinesiology’s connection to continuous learning.

The above statement may sound strange or even wrong to some people. I think I can understand why. To me, it seems that “Western” Kinesiologists focus for Kinesiology, or better health, is to do such things as increase strength, flexibility, and physical activity. “This is too tight, so we should stretch that. Or, this is weak so we should strengthen that.” From this approach, we gain health benefits from increasing our strength and endurance. However, if the body is out of alignment, even if we have increased strength and flexibility, we will likely continue to injure ourselves or have health problems.

We could say that the focus of mindfulness/yoga is alignment. Specifically for Kinesiologists, alignment of the bones, muscles, skin, and organs. This focus may sound more acceptable to Kinesiologists who are trying to understand Kinesiology’s link to mindfulness. To find this alignment, the teacher must try to spark insight into such things and continuous learning and listening. It is such things that help spark insight into how the body feels, how the body moves, and what the body needs. When we cultivate the awareness/mindfulness of the body we also cultivate the awareness of the mind and the entire person. We are bringing the body, mind, and spirit into alignment through continuous learning. A side benefit of this process would be the development of strength, flexibility, endurance, and psychological/emotional health. With mindfulness, Kinesiologists could bring a focus of alignment to their research and clients.

Mindfulness is about kinesiology, psychology, and education... really every college could research mindfulness. During my undergraduate degree and master’s degree in Kinesiology, I continuously found connections between the different colleges. I hope that each college will see our connections, so that mindfulness research can be completed in all colleges with each college’s unique perspective. Unique perspectives in

mindfulness research bring different opportunities for learning. For example, Kabat-Zinn (psychology/medicine based) has utilized a prescriptive approach in mindfulness programs, whereas the mindfulness program in this study was non-prescriptive. In the future, prescriptive and non-prescriptive approaches could be combined, and multidisciplinary work could guide this approach.

Quantitative research brings unique opportunities for learning in mindfulness research. Through such things as operational definitions and measures of mindfulness, researchers can explore and provide evidence for the relationships between mindfulness levels and health outcomes, and the influence of mindfulness interventions on health. A consistent operational definition of mindfulness could also help provide people with a vocabulary to discuss and spark learning into mindfulness.

Even though mindfulness is suggested to be the indefinable and immeasurable, I would encourage quantitative researchers to undergo quantitative studies, because mindfulness is about inquiry/continuous learning and finding out for yourself. I would say, and encourage mindfulness researchers to continuously explore the question: Knowledge is not the actual when discussing mindfulness, no matter what paradigm is employed, is it not? One limitation of quantitative research methods in mindfulness research is that it provides limited exploration and communication of experiences/processes.

Constructivist/qualitative research focuses on exploring and communicating experiences/phenomenon. This focus is ideal for communicating and exploring mindfulness, because mindfulness is discussed to be a process and not an outcome. I think a focus on process provides more opportunities for non-researchers to understand and to become interested in mindfulness research findings. Qualitative research findings

are communicated through such things as quotes, stories, and photography: which I think are well received mediums in the public.

Fictional story can be ideal for communicating mindfulness research because the story communicates perspectives and human insights about mindfulness, and not mindfulness itself. This honors the work of mindfulness teachers who discuss mindfulness as the indefinable and immeasurable. One limitation of qualitative research methods is that it provides limited exploration and communication of outcomes.

4.3 LIMITATIONS

Every choice that I have made in my thesis can be seen as a strength or a limitation. The following paragraphs represent some of the choices that I struggled with during the development of this thesis.

One could say that a limitation of this study was that the selection of the women was based on a compromise between the need to select participants purposefully, and the need to provide an ideal educational environment. To select the participants in this study I listened to Stake's (1995), one of the leading researchers in case study, insight, "the first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn." (p. 4). I selected participants who were willing to talk about mindfulness in order to maximize the potential to have rich information for my thesis. And, I selected participants who were willing to talk in groups and able to commit to participating in a 6 and half week mindfulness program, in order to maximize the potential to have rich discussions in the mindfulness program.

A second possible limitation of this study was that I have limited experiences as a mindfulness teacher. I have no formal training in mindfulness-based meditation as developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn. However, I do have formal training in Hatha Yoga and

body scans. I have read, and explored in my daily life, Krishnamurti's work for the past eight years. As well, to continue my mindfulness learning, and to develop this study's mindfulness program, I had three mindfulness "teachers" provide program feedback. Despite my experiences with mindfulness learning, there may have been times in the mindfulness program when I did not extract for the students the mindfulness that the activity implied.

Third, this is not a traditional thesis. If researchers were expecting statistics, measured outcomes, findings that could be generalized to similar populations, documentary style/non-fictional representation of the results, and traditional academic writing, they might be disappointed with this thesis. Instead, I have employed a constructivist paradigm; and my own insight into mindfulness and the insight of meditation teachers have guided this thesis. In terms of how insight has guided my thesis, I have omitted a conclusion section because the work by meditation authors sparks insight into mindfulness so that we can find out for ourselves. As well, from my knowledge, traditional academic writing has never been employed by "Eastern" meditation/yoga teachers to discuss mindfulness and yoga. Stories and poetry have been shared in Western and Eastern meditation books to help spark insight into mindfulness.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study sparks a few questions to be explored. In particular, how will we facilitate learning into mindful inquiry? Can we continue to explore what role physical activity, language, the mind, the body, the spirit, nature, animals, group settings, stories, poetry, questions, discussions, guest speakers, journaling, yoga, and Krishnamurti's

work play in mindful learning? I think this discussion extends into the question of: How will we communicate mindful inquiry in research? Can we continue to explore the insight that each medium has (such as stories, measures, and poetry) for communicating mindful inquiry. Through continuously refining mindfulness programs and the communication of mindfulness research, I think that this will ensure continuous learning into mindful inquiry for the participants in mindfulness programs, researchers, professionals, and lay people.

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APPENDIX A

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

APPENDIX B

Women's Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "*Movement and Stillness: Mindfulness and the Art of Inquiry*". Please read this information carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher:

Rachel Donen M.Sc. student, College of Kinesiology
Phone number (306) 244-3879

Supervisor:

Dr. Kent Kowalski College of Kinesiology
Phone number (306) 966-1079

Purpose and Procedure:

My work explores mindful inquiry. The purpose of this research is to try to understand middle-aged female yoga students' experiences in a mindfulness program. A large part of the program is yoga, but will also include a guest speaker on palliative care, a trip to the SPCA, an exercise on developing multiple perspectives about palliative care issues, journaling, and many discussions. We would meet two times per week, each session will be 60 to 90 minutes at Yoga Central. Of course the SPCA activity will be at the SPCA. Transportation to the SPCA will be provided if needed. The program is six and a half weeks. When possible, the mindfulness program will be audio or videotaped.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

There is little risk in participating in this study and there may be some benefits, but these benefits cannot be guaranteed. A possible benefit of your participation may be that this study's mindfulness program may enrich your yoga practice, because you will not only explore mindfulness in yoga but also in discussions and daily living. As you may know, yoga has eight aspects or limbs. The asanas, the yoga postures, creates only one limb. The other seven limbs are characterized as ethical precepts, personal practices such as self-discovery, the art of breathing, moving from the external to an internal journey, concentration, meditation, and samadhi.

Your participation in this study may also add to our understanding of mindfulness education and middle-aged female yoga students' experiences in mindfulness education. All activities will be modified for each individual's needs if necessary. As well, the teacher of the mindfulness program is CPR-C and First Aid certified, and will always have access to a phone in case of injury or emergency. If necessary, the appropriate health care provider/facility will be recommended/used in case of injury. Saskatchewan Health has been notified about my study and you may phone their 24-hour Sask. Health line (1-877-8000-0002) if needed.

Storage of Data:

The College of Kinesiology's regulations for storing data will be followed. Dr. Kent

Kowalski will be responsible for data storage. The data collected will be stored in a secure file in a locked office at the U of S for a minimum of 5 years after the study is complete.

Confidentiality:

The data will be part of a Masters thesis, a journal article, presentations to the College of Kinesiology, a conference presentation, public presentations, and perhaps as fictional short story books for children. With your permission, some excerpts from your journals will be made public so that we can help others understand your experiences in the mindfulness program. There are limits to which I can ensure confidentiality of the information shared during the mindfulness program. For example, I cannot ensure that the participants in this study will not share the information provided in the focus group interviews. However, the following procedures will help retain confidentiality. (1) You will be given a fake name in order to prevent the public from recognizing your identity. (2) The researcher and her supervisor will be the only people to review the videotaped and audio taped portions of the mindfulness program. (3) In any cases in the transcripts and journals where links are needed to identify participants to their data, these links will be destroyed after data collection has been completed, and (4) Direct quotes from your journal and from the transcripts of the audio taped portion of the mindfulness program may be used; however, for the most part your information will be used in conjunction with the researcher's insights into mindfulness to help create fictional stories about the mindfulness inquiry process.

Rights to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. For example, you will *not* be restricted from taking any class at Yoga Central if you withdraw from the study. Throughout the study I will remind you of your right to withdraw from the study and refuse participation. You have the right to refuse to answer any individual questions. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

Questions:

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher at the number provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on (February 9, 2006). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. If you are interested in reading a summary of the completed study please contact the researcher at the number provided above.

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Researcher)

(Date)

APPENDIX C

FEEDBACK FORM 1

Please read the entire program before providing feedback. The feedback format is open-ended. I would prefer your comments to be documented in Microsoft Word so that I will not have problems reading your handwriting, but you are welcome to handwrite your comments. If you choose to handwrite your comments, please write them on loose-leaf paper and label each activity with its feedback (e.g. Week 1, Activity 1). If you choose to use Microsoft Word, please enter as much space as you need for each activity as my formatting only provides the labels. For each activity, please comment on:

1) At the beginning of this activity I described the essence of the activity. What aspects of this activity do you think captures the essence of the activity that I described?

2) How would you modify this activity in order to capture the essence of the activity that I described?

3) Are there any additional important issues that should be considered?

You are invited to comment on such things as the sequencing of activities, the activities, the environments, and the facilitating/teaching techniques. When you have completed the feedback form, please email, hand in, or mail me your feedback (email and mailing addresses can be found on your consent form). Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback for my study.

Week 1/Activity 1
Week 1/Activity 2
Week 2/Activity 3
Week 2/Activity 4
Week 3/Activity 5
Week 3/Activity 6
Week 4/Activity 7
Week 4/Activity 8
Week 5/Activity 9
Week 5/Activity 10
Week 6/Activity 11
Week 6/Activity 12
Week 7/Activity 13
Week 7/Activity 14
Week 8/Activity 15

APPENDIX D

FEEDBACK FORM 2

Please read activities ____ before providing feedback. The feedback format is open-ended. I would prefer your comments to be documented in Microsoft Word so that I will not have problems reading your handwriting, but you are welcome to handwrite your comments. If you choose to handwrite your comments, please write them on loose-leaf paper and label each activity with its feedback (e.g. Week 1/Activity 1). If you choose to use Microsoft Word, please enter as much space as you need for each activity as my formatting only provides the labels. For each activity, please comment on:

1) At the beginning of this activity I described the essence of the activity. What aspects of this activity do you think captures the essence of the activity that I described?

2) How would you modify this activity in order to capture the essence of the activity that I described?

3) Are there any additional important issues that should be considered?

You are invited to comment on such things as the sequencing of activities, the activities, the environments, and the facilitating/teaching techniques. When you have completed the feedback form, please email, hand in, or mail me your feedback (email and mailing addresses can be found on your consent form). Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback for my study.

Week 1/Activity 1
Week 1/Activity 2
Week 2/Activity 3
Week 2/Activity 4
Week 3/Activity 5
Week 3/Activity 6
Week 4/Activity 7
Week 4/Activity 8
Week 5/Activity 9
Week 5/Activity 10
Week 6/Activity 11
Week 6/Activity 12
Week 7/Activity 13
Week 7/Activity 14
Week 8/Activity 15

APPENDIX E

Initial Journal Instructions

“[I would like you to] keep a journal throughout this course, recording your experiences with the contemplative practices we engage in and any insights or changes you notice. You will turn these journals in for review at various points during the semester [if you feel comfortable]. The form of your journal and the method you use to record your experiences is completely up to you. Your journal may be written, it may be sketches or drawings, it may include photographs, and so forth. What is important is that you come up with a method of documenting your experience in this program throughout [its] entire [duration]. These journals will be reviewed periodically throughout the [eight weeks, if you feel comfortable sharing]” (Holland, 2004, p. 481).

Modified Journal Instructions

1. Description of a journal

- A reflective journal gives you permission to *reflect* on and *record* the experiences you just had.

2. How should you record your experiences?

This should be a low stress exercise so feel free to try

- Writing, drawing, photos, or some combination of recording tools...
- Find a style of record keeping you prefer
- *Record the date* for each journal entry

3. How often should you journal?

- Right after each activity in the program
- Most often, there will be time provided in the program for you to journal

4. How much should you write?

- Until your tale is told

5. Content: What should I record in my journal?

- Reflect on your engagement and experience in the activity

Knowledge

In retrospect, were there any connections made between the activity and

- Yourself? (e.g. In gymnastics class I realized I had a fear of heights)
- Others?
- Nature?
- Life?
- Things you already know?

Wonder

What questions did your experience make you think about?

What was new or familiar?

What did you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch?

What were your reactions?

- Emotions such as confusion, anger, and happiness
- Physical reactions such as sweating, sighing, and your heart racing
- Behaviours such as smiling and frowning

What appealed to you?

Learning

Did you learn something that you will take into life with you?

- The “ah hah” of life
- Many times an experience has the potential to give the gift of a life lesson (e.g. From gymnastics class, I learned that “I won’t die” if I jump off the balance beam, even though I am afraid of heights)

APPENDIX F

MINDFULNESS PROGRAM

Activity 1

1. Rapport building. (video and audio familiarization, 5 mins)

- 1) Explain confidentiality. 2) Ask the women for permission to allow whoever misses a session to view the video.

2. Journal. (10 mins)

The women will be given journals (a binder with lined paper) and journal instructions.

DIRECTIONS

- Ask women to always bring journal. Review mindfulness schedule.
- Explain journaling process.

3. Rapport building. (5 mins)

- Explain respect for each person when talking.
- What is your name? Briefly explain what interests you about this study.
- “As you may know, we will be inquiring into or learning about mindfulness. So what is inquiry/learning? Today’s discussion will explore: What do *we think* inquiry/learning is?”

4. Focus group. (60 mins)

Note. There was only time to explore the first two questions.

Based on your experience...

1. How do you learn something? (if no one talks... uni, yoga, life)
2. What value is there to question how well you know something? (aside, if no one talks... i.e., asanas, “The Trueman Show”- question reality)
3. How do you know your views on a question that has no answer? (I.e., Is there a god? How do you know? What is the best movie? How do you know?)
4. It could be said that B.K.S Iyengar knows a lot about yoga. How do you think he engages in his yoga practice? What do you think his mental state is during his yoga practice?
5. How often do you question what you know?

6. When do you question what you know?
7. How do you feel when you question what you know about a topic? Does your level of expertise make an impact on your feelings?

5. Exploration.

For the next few days, I invite you to listen to and observe what you find when you explore two questions:

Lets start with the breath.

- a) Have you every watched the activity of your breath?
- b) What is your breath doing from moment to moment?

Now lets move to the mind.

- a) Have you ever watched the activity of your mind?
- b) What is your mind doing from moment to moment?

Now, What does the activity of the mind mean? Explore this question.

To be clear, I am not asking for an interpretation, an analysis, a conclusion, or an answer. I am inviting listening and observation.

6. Journal. (10 mins)

Activity 2

1. Yoga lesson (60 mins)

-Invite exploration into the activity of mind/breath during practice.

1. Body scan/breath awareness (breath through nose)
2. Parvatasana Virasana and twist (propped sitting, purple block and/or foamy)
3. Gomukhasana arms in Virasana (rolled blanket under front of ankle)
4. Psoas stretch over bolster
5. Supta Padangusthasana I and II with support of bolster/block at G.T.
6. Tadasana (weight in front on ankle joint, stand on metatarsals, draw heel flesh back, 4 points of foot)
7. Find mound of big toe, lift mid ham, release of pubic bone, serratus anterior
8. Vrkrasana (extension from foundation)
9. Virabhadrasana II (spine alignment)
10. Parsvakonasana (block, spine alignment, purple block on back hip, wall)
11. Tadasana (firm and lift thigh bones up, middle of hamstring lifts to sit bone)
12. Trikonasana (back hip rests on block, face wall, front hand on shin palm up)
13. Crossed thighs twist
14. Savasana

2. Share stories from exploration into: 1) Have you ever watched the activity of your breath/mind? 2) What is your breath/mind doing from moment to moment? (5 mins)

3. Read (Listening and observing) pgs. 101-end of first para.103. **Questions** about reading. (15 mins)

4. Exploration. Throughout the next week, I invite you to listen to and observe what you find when you explore the question: Can you listen not only to what is being said but also to your own reactions to what is said? If you would like, throughout the week you may look back at the reading from today. (Not asking for interpretation, analysis, or conclusion, just inviting listening and observing).

5. Journal stories about and reactions to previous day's questions and journal reactions to today's activity. (10 mins)

Activity 3

1. Multiple perspectives activity. Observing the beliefs we bring to a discussion. **RIGHT TO REFUSE PARTICIPATION REMINDER**

a) Warm Up: “Silly” multiple perspectives activity (5 mins, 1:45-1:50)

- Have the women switch chairs in the room.
 - Have the women on one side of the room report what the room looks like from their chairs, then have the women on the other side do the same.
 - My summary- So, depending on where you are in the room you will have a different perspective of what the room looks like.
 - Have the women switch chairs again.
 - Quickly ask a few women what the room looks like and if it looks different or even slightly different from before.
 - Ask the women if one perspective is right or wrong.
 - Ask the women if we all have the ability to see the different perspectives.
 - Summary- So, we are going to look at a palliative care issue in the same way. That is, **we will try to see a palliative care issue from different perspectives.**
- Define “ethical”, “issue”, and “discussion” before beginning “b” (eg right/wrong, good/bad, authenticity. Codes of conduct)

Palliative care – support person through process of dying, different focus of care: not looking for a cure, needs are met

- If the women do not use stories, then have a part “b” to develop stories that make a point/supporting evidence for each side of the argument.
- Passive Euthanasia and Active Euthanasia
- **Read articles (15 mins, 1:50-2:05)** passive euthanasia. (Terri Shiavo)
- Need to define terms. Ask women for their definitions first.

b) Palliative Care discussion (30-40 mins, 2:05-2:40)

- Ask the women to report one piece of info that remains with them. Reaction.
- Ask the women to report the ethical issues concerning the outcomes, rules, duties, values, and beliefs....
- Ask the women to report the overall ethical issue(s). The cause. **Is it ethical to remove Terri’s feeding tube when only one of Terri’s guardians approves?**
- Factors that influence a decision were mentioned throughout

Not done due to time restraints - Ask the women – **What are the arguments for and against removing Terri’s feeding tube?**

- As a group, we will develop one possible argument for each side.
- Ask the women to- in groups, come up with one argument and supporting evidence for each side of the argument (I will ask them to think about such things as outcomes, rules, and values when developing their arguments).

2. Listening. (5-7 mins, **2:40-3pm**, alone, they take position of choice.)

Exploration. I invite you to listen and observe what you find when you explore the question: Can you listen not only to what is being said but also to your own reactions to what is said? (Not asking for analysis, conclusion, or answer).

3. Journal. (10 mins, **3-3:15**)

Activity 4

1. Exploring listening. (15 mins, 3:15-3:30) So we are exploring listening. Lets look into: What is listening?

2. Partner exploration. In partners we will discuss the following question: Can you listen not only to what is being said but also to your own reactions to what is said?

3. Yoga lesson. (30 mins, 3:30-4pm)

1 Lie supine on bolster (bolster at floating ribs, hold foam block between hands, arms overhead)

Retract coracoids and wrap delts to front (forward and up)

2 Virasana (1. arms overhead and palms face eachother, 2. belt arms below elbow and take arms over head, and 3 hold block b/w hands and arms overhead, firm triceps point and lift middle of radius, to lengthen arms move inner elbow to outer and outer to inner, outer collarbones move forward and down)

3 Pose of the child (Press palms forward and down to send hips/G.T. back and down, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, palm has small space/cup)

4 Half dog (wrap of deltoids, coracoids in, top of sacrum in and up, may need to lengthen through coccyx, lengthen front of spine as head and heart tend to drop)

5 Adho Mukha Svanasana (hands on wood blocks lifts radius, and feet on blocks lifts hips)

6. Twist in Sukasana (passive and active)

7 Savasana with bolster under thighs

4. Exploration. (10 mins, 4:10-4:20)

Over the next week, I invite you to listen to and observe what you find when you explore two questions: What is space? What is psychological space? (Not asking for answer, conclusion, etc.).

5. Journal. (10 mins, 4:20-4:30)

Activity 5

RIGHT TO REFUSE PARTICIPATION REMINDER

(60-70 mins, 2:45-3:55)

1. Palliative care speaker.

–Father Mark Miller

2. *Not done due to time restraints.* Journal initial reactions to speaker. (5 mins)

3. *Not done due to time restraints.* Question and answer period

Ask speaker 1) Why do you speak about this topic/these stories?

2) How have other audiences reacted to your story: what have they done over the next several weeks?

4. *Not done due to time restraints.* Individual listening. (5-7 mins, 3:55-4pm). Invite listening and observation of everything.

5. Asked to journal at home due to time restraints.

6. Daily exploration.

Ask participants to explore – How did hearing Father Mark speak or stories influence your understanding of palliative care? What does listening mean in palliative care (e.g. patient, family, in general)?

Activity 6

1. Imagery and exploring psychological space. (5 mins, 3:15-3:20)

Participants in position of choice (one they can listen in).

Picture yourself lying down on your bed in your bedroom. Look around the room. Get a feel for the room. What do you see, hear, smell, and feel? Now, as you lie there, picture a bulldozer dumping a ton of objects: a t.v., a picture, t-shirts, pillows, blankets, videos, extra furniture... an infinite amount of things. Everything is piled up: on the floor, on the bed, on the furniture, even on you, anywhere there is available space. Soon you are feeling cramped. You have nowhere to move. There is no space. What do you see, hear, and smell? What does the room feel like? How is your breath? Do you crave space?

Lets quickly let the bulldozer remove everything in one scoop: the clothing, the t.v., the furniture, the blankets... only you remain in the room. The entire contents of the room have been emptied. You are lying on a comfortable surface. What do you see? What does the room feel like? How is your breath? What does the size of the room feel like? Can you see the space?

What is the value of having space? What is the value of psychological space? What do we mean by psychological space?

Lets look into this. Can we empty the contents of our consciousness, not through analysis, not over time, but instantaneously? Can thought function only when needed and also come to an end, so in that very action there is space, measureless and infinite space? If we can hear this, if we really understand this, then what takes place?

We are no longer the analyzer analyzing, the controller controlling, the thinker thinking, the observer observing, and the listener listening. There is only observation, there is only sound, there is only the seeing of the fact: life is present. Do you understand this? You are no longer bound by your thoughts: past experiences, conclusions, opinions, ideals, and authority. There is no effort or force by the self, by the “me”, to change, to find an answer, to act in a certain way. You have emptied the contents of your consciousness. You are free to listen, to see, to be present.

But please do not accept what I have said. Find out for yourself.

2. Yoga lesson. (40 mins, 3:20-4:00)

Find circular movement and space

a) First have hand flat on ground, just there, feeling what happens. Then have palm pressing forward and down without moving other body parts. Can you feel the energy in the arm? Can you find a little lift in the shoulder and extension of the shoulder away from the fingers?) How does the joint feel? What movement occurred?

- 1 Half dog (separately, press into each finger down and forward to see connection to scap. Now, press into index finger to firmly place scap on ribcage, can you feel circular motion of scap?)
2. Half dog (find lift first then, coracoids retract (try protraction and retraction), then wrap of delts)
- 3 Find heart center in cat (movement of scaps, or roll inner collarbones up and back, sternal notch lifts to head and drops into body slightly)
- 4 Adho Mukha Svanasana with heart center
- 5 Pose of the child (find heart center, can you feel circular motion at hips, first back and up then back and down).
- 6 Half dog with partner eg 2 rainbows (lift of hips with knees bent in order to take hamstrings out and find spine alignment, lengthen front of spine, top of sacrum in and up, belt around G.T. lift up and back, analogy of train wheels/Ferris wheel to hips, pelvis releases forward and down while GT's release up and back)
- 7 Adho Mukha Svanasana (same queue as 7)
- 8 Child's pose on bolster with arms down by hips (rest each cheek on bolster, feel breath in back body, resist chest against bolster)
- 9 Savasana

3. Read and Discuss. (Psychological space) pg. 46. (~15 mins, 4:00-4:20).

4. Exploration. Throughout the next week, I invite you to listen to and observe what you find when you explore 1) What is the self? Have you ever watched the activity of the self? I am not asking for an interpretation, a judgment, for you to make an analysis of what is right or wrong. I am just inviting you to listen to and observe the activity of the self.

Addition due to confused/resistant response to article from participants.

Asked women to explore- What happened when you heard the article (judgment, opinions?)? Where does that come from? Did we hear our reactions to the article?

5. Journal. (10 mins)

Activity 7

RIGHT TO REFUSE PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAW REMINDER

1. a) Drive to the SPCA (~15mins)

b) SPCA experience (~ 40 mins)

Short talk from education volunteer

- Briefly outline such things as hygienic behaviour needed when working with animals, how to interact with the animals, how easy diseases spread because of the amount of dogs and cats coming in and out of the facility (i.e. importance of good hygiene).

NOTE. The women will be reminded that they can choose to opt out these activities.

c) SPCA activities

Will bathe, play with, walk, brush, feed or do some combination of these activities with the dogs, rabbits, and cats.

2. Journal (5mins)

3. Discussion. (10 mins)

Questions for the women – What are your reactions to this activity?

Not done due to time restraints -What feelings, emotions, and values (i.e. compassion, respect, etc.) came to mind during this activity?

4. Drive back. (~ 15 mins)

Activity 8

1. Read pgs. 71- 73. (What is the self?) **Questions.** (20 mins)

2. Exploration. For the next week few days, I invite you to listen to and observe what you find when you explore two questions: 1) What is like to explore with a mind that says “I know”? and 2) What is like to explore with a mind that says “I don’t know”?

3. Journal. (5 mins)

4. Yoga lesson. (40 mins)

1 Lie on back, block under scaps (Rainbow analogy, lift of ziphoid, roll up inner collarbones to find a little more lift, intercostals)

2 Low lunges (teach ileum anatomy and movement, 1. two blocks for hands, 2. block under front foot)

3 Setu Bandha Sarvangasana with block between knees (twice, 1st with belt under glutes to act like swing to hang out in, 2nd no props, activate hamstrings, if cramp in hamstrings then lift toes, review traffic circles)

4 Setu Bandha Sarvangasana, block under mid-lower part of sacrum (choose height, lengthwise, grab outer mat, roll up inner collarbones, long back of neck from lengthening up medial border of scaps, broad back body, find width b/w hips)

5 Optional -Salabhasana I (hips forward into ground, head and chest lifting; scaps, ziphoid, and illium awareness, breath in intercostals, breath in pelvis)X3

6 Ustrasana (hips forward, ileum roll down, transverse abs engaged, psoas in and up, 1. on chair and bolster, 2. onto blocks)

- Virasana between each Ustrasana (1. sit on feet, 2 sit on floor/prop)

7 Piriformis stretch on chair

8 Bardvanjasana on chair

9 Chair Savasana

5. Journal (5 mins)

Activity 9

1. Side stretch to open shoulders and a half dog. (5 mins)

2. Read poem.

Before I volunteered for the SPCA,

I knew that there were many animals in need of homes

But... I didn't understand how many animals do find a home, how strenuous the SPCA experience can be for animals, the frequent episodes of diarrhoea, the great volume of barking, not wanting to go back into their cage, how long the stay could be, and how many employees and volunteers are needed to operate the facility each day

Before I met a holocaust survivor,

I knew that 6 million Jews had died in World War II

But... I didn't understand that the person beside me could have been a little boy who once feared for his life every moment, saw people shot dead, watched many people stand by and do nothing, and was hidden in an underground cellar for months by a civilian who dared not even to tell her son because he was a Nazi

Before I had my first experience with death and dying,

I knew that people died and people grieved

But... I didn't understand the aching of my heart, what selflessness was each day of care, that I could see life one moment and none the next, the peace which death brings, and what a gift each breath is

Before my last relationship,

I knew that during break-ups people cried, were sad, were sometimes angry, and break-ups were hard to get over

But... I didn't understand the beauty of being able to feel all of these "negative" emotions, because it meant that I was also capable of feeling love

I knew...

But... I didn't understand

3. Journal initial reactions to poem. What would your poem look like? (5 mins)

4. Discussion (45 mins) For take home.

1. What would your poem sound like? (For such things as the SPCA, yoga, and daily activities?)

2. What relationships develop when we explore the subtleties between knowing and understanding?

What relationships develop if we go into each experience as learners?

What relationships develop when we suspend our knowing so that we can listen/observe?

What relationships develop when we know: I know my husband is this, I know the SPCA is that, I know myself to be that....?

5. Journal.

6. Daily activity task. (15 mins)

It can be easy to be aware of what is happening moment-to-moment in an activity that is highly emotional (e.g., SPCA activity and Palliative Care Speaker) because it can grab our heart and command our attention. What do you think of your level of awareness about your moment-to-moment experiences in your daily life? b) For the next week, we will all choose an activity that happens on a daily basis where we can be aware of our moment-to-moment experiences (e.g. driving or yoga). I am inviting you to explore, listen to, and observe your moment-to-moment experiences in one of your daily activities. Can you listen to and observe such things as your thoughts, feelings, sensations, reactions, and images.

Activity 10

1. Yoga lesson (70 mins, more detail than previous classes on the inner body)

- 1) Side stretch
- 2) Half dog
- 3) Tadasana (feet, vertical lift)
- 4) Tadasana (knees, vertical lift, block b/w thighs and belt)
- Tadasana (neutral pelvis)
- 5) Tadasana parsvatasana (tucker/tilter, neutral/psoas pathway, arm circles)
- 6) Supta Tadasana with partner
- 7) Supta Baddha Konasana (block under feet, block under GT)
- 8) Tadasana (upper body broadens)
- 9) Vrkrasana (vertical and horizontal energy)
- 10) Tadasana
- 11) Virasana
- 12) Virasana twist
- 13) Jathara Parivartanasana (bent knees, stack hips)
- 14) Savasana

2. Journal. (10 mins) Verbal and actual knowing. What did you understand verbally and what did you understand actually?

Exploration questions. What is it like to explore with a mind that says “I know”? and What is it like to explore with a mind that says “I don’t know”?

Activity 11

1. Share stories about daily activity task. (Each person shares one, 15 mins, 1:45-2)

2. Discussion. (40 mins, 2:00-2:40)

1. What did you hear, see, and feel?
2. What were your reactions to your observations?
3. Did you judge yourself? How?
4. Did you tell yourself or think you should be doing such and such a thing and not the other?
5. Can you think of any connections between your experience with this activity and other activities in the program? Describe.

3. Journal initial responses. (5 mins, 2:40-2:45)

4. Share/Read my story. Discussion. (15 –20 mins, 2:45-3:05)

What does it mean to be completely alone?

Sometimes the word “alone” brings thoughts of loneliness, fear, and isolation: being disconnected from others, the world, and our self.

When I injured my knee in the summer of 2006, it took me many weeks, perhaps months, to get back onto my yoga mat. I didn’t even want to unroll my mat and sit. So, I avoided my mat. I went to physio and did every other movement activity that I was capable of, starting with crutching around the house and progressing to rehab exercises, swimming, and walking.

I avoided my yoga mat because I knew that once I sat upon it, I would have to spend time alone with myself. I would hear that I was frustrated with my injury and sad that I could not spontaneously jump, dance, or stand on my head. I knew that I would be confronted with physical and mental difficulties. I also did not want to get back onto my mat because I was fearful of re-injury.

But, when I did return to my yoga mat one day in my basement, I saw, heard, and felt what my moment-to-moment experience revealed. Yes, at first I did feel awkward and my breath was non-existent. But after the first awkward five minutes had passed, I found myself in Savasana. I found myself grateful for the return of my breath, joyous that I could participate in yoga, and yes, I had a few thoughts of surprise at how tight and weak my body was.

Stepping back onto my mat gave me permission to do such things as listen, observe, and feel what my moment-to-moment experience revealed. I am truly grateful that yoga gives me permission to be *alone* with myself to *discover* and *develop deep relationships* with myself, others, and the world.

5. Journal. (10 mins, 3:05-3:15)

What relationships develop when you allow yourself to listen, observe, and feel what is happening (whether or not we think the experience is “positive” or “negative”)?

Activity 12

1. Read pg. 447.(5 mins, 3:15-3:20)

2. Journal initial reactions. (5 mins., 3:20-3:25)

3. Discussion. (45 mins, 3:25-4:10)

A. Can we ask the question: What do you hear?, and... listen. Can we listen to everything that is happening moment-to-moment? Not through any effort, not by willing, or control- the “I”, the “me” says I should listen to my thoughts, I should be calm and quiet, I should answer the question, I should do this or that. Do you hear this? So, can we listen to everything, without any effort, so in that very action there is listening without the listener?

Ask for initial reaction, questions, feelings about reading.

B. Not done due to time restraints. What do you see?

C. Not done due to time restraints. What do you feel?

4. Journal. (10 mins, 4:10-4:20)

5. Participant shared comment about poem from the other day (approached me about sharing because did not have chance to share with the group)

Asked one participant – What do you hear, see, and feel in yoga? How do you engage in this experience?

Exploration question -What distracts you from listening?

Activity 13

1. Final discussion.

- a. What would you want the reader to understand most about your experiences in this program?
- b. Participant question- Wondering about how the activities are connected. Not discussed as participant who asked question was not here.
- c. Participant question – What is the purpose of the study?
- d. Some Themes. What do you think?

Listening, friendship, laughter, stories, trust, frustration, chatter, conflict within (between what should be and what is), effort, opinion, deafness, fear, anxiety, judgment, evaluation, service to others, compassion, the self, the sacred self, Who am I?, awareness of being defined, questioning, exploring, gratitude, learning, understanding, uncertainty, trying or controlling, thought trying to find an answer/understanding, “This will take me more than a lifetime to understand”, a searcher, language, escape, openness, selflessness, selfishness, awareness of the body, mind, heart, and spirit; and space.

- e. Use of fictional stories in thesis.

2. Final Question and answer period about study.

3. Gift bags.

4. Get together meal invitation from participant.

Mindfulness Program Rationale

There are many practices to cultivate mindfulness and philosophies about mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In the following paragraphs, I will share why I have considered other mindfulness concepts and mindfulness-like therapies such as cognitive-behavioral-therapy and flow for the mindfulness program, but have chosen not to use them.

Cognitive-behavioral-therapy and mindfulness

I have a B.Sc. Kin, Honours from the University of Saskatchewan, where my honours project was titled “Chronic whiplash pain in Saskatoon: Are cognitive-behavioural-therapy (CBT) principles being applied?” I learned about CBT, its processes, and its treatment strategies. I learned that CBT has been effective for chronic whiplash pain (Soderlund & Lindberg, 2001) and therefore, I was interested in whether or not practitioners working with chronic whiplash pain patients in Saskatoon used this treatment. Many practitioners reported providing CBT, however one psychologist reported that what some physical practitioners believe to be CBT would not be CBT to a psychologist. This point was important because not all patients received treatment from a psychologist.

I was interested in CBT because it claims to use processes such as self-discovery and awareness to help heal chronic pain (Turk, Meichenbaum, & Genest, 1983). For example, the patient is placed as the primary participant in the process of discovering what pain is. However, from my ongoing inquiry into the mindfulness literature and process, I question whether or not a process laden in evaluation, goals, and based on the operant conditioning approach is facilitating awareness and self-discovery.

Baer (2003) acknowledged that CBT and mindfulness “training” differ in their use of goals and evaluation. One primary goal of CBT is to change maladaptive thoughts that lead to maladaptive behaviours (Turk, Meichenbaum, & Genest, 1983), whereas mindfulness training facilitates an attitude of non-striving (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). As well, during MBM, participants are not encouraged to evaluate thoughts that are deemed irrational or maladaptive, whereas CBT participants are encouraged to evaluate irrational thoughts and behaviours (Baer, 2003). I have not used CBT principles in the mindfulness program because of its use of goals, evaluation, and the operant conditioning approach. The use of these strategies makes me uneasy because I question whether or not an environment of freedom to explore and question is provided when goals, evaluations, and conditioning are shaping our world.

Flow and mindfulness

Flow is suggested to be a state or a creative process of discovering something new (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Flow is a creative process: personal creativity where the explorer experiences the world in new ways, or creativity that changes our culture. Flow’s creative process of discovering something new is limited to domains that have rules and procedures and fields that have experts who can confirm a task to be novel (Csikszentmihalyis, 1996). Flow’s field criterion limits creative tasks to events that are easy to measure (Csikszentmihalyis, 1996). Csikszentmihalyis stated that “[t]here can be agreement on whether a new computer game, rock song, or economic formula is actually novel, and therefore creative; less easy to agree on the novelty of an act of compassion or of an insight into human nature” (p. 29). Overall, flow has nine proposed defining characteristics: 1) a perception of high skills is balanced to that of a perception of a great challenge, 2) the

task has clear goals or the person knows what to do, 3) there is immediate feedback on our performance, 4) the person's concentration is focused on the immediate task, 5) the person excludes distractions, 6) failure is not a worry, 7) self-consciousness is let go, 8) time disappears, and 9) the person enjoys doing the activity for its own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), flow states can be experienced in any activity as long as the above conditions are met.

Flow and mindfulness descriptions, as described by Csikszentmihalyi, Kabat-Zinn, and Krishnamurti, are similar yet different. For example, flow and mindfulness are both characterized to be experiences of the here and now, where attention and concentration is on the task being performed. However, during flow, people have clear goals and creativity is limited to tasks in which their novelty is easy to measure, whereas during mindfulness an attitude of non-striving is utilized, and creativity journeys into the immeasurable.

When I was trying to understand the similarities and differences between flow and mindfulness, it reminded me of some of my traveling experiences. When I was traveling in Italy with a few friends, we quickly found out that many Italians who worked at the train stations did not speak English. Alistair, one of my friends from Australia, would persistently try to buy train tickets from the Italian clerks. One persistently spoke English and the other persistently spoke Italian. We could see that Alistair would get frustrated during these English/Italian conversations because very little was being understood. Alistair even tried to speak with an Italian accent in hopes that the English could then be understood. So, even though both conversationalists were speaking a language, the only way that some communication was possible was through body

language and body gestures. This story captures why flow will not be included in this study's program. That is, even though flow has similar characteristics as mindfulness, it appears that flow is not a process with the elements of exploration and questioning into the immeasurable.

Which philosophies underlie the Mindfulness Program?

Krishnamurti's works primarily guided the mindfulness program. Buddhist and yoga philosophy also were used to guided the mindfulness program. Yoga, Krishnamurti's work, and Buddhism have been recognized as contributing to the roots of mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1982). As of now, some of my experiences with these philosophies consists of my daily meditation, partaking in 2 mindfulness meditation audio recordings (Kabat-Zinn, 1995; Weil & Kabat-Zinn, 2001), reading "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" (Suzuki, Fromm, & Martino, 1963), bird watching, travelling, reading various sections of books by the Dalai Lama, Krishnamurti, and yogis (such as Farhi, 2003; Lasater, 2000; Mehta, 2000; Mira & Mehta, 1990; Thakar, 2005); teaching yoga since January of 2004, partaking in ten yoga workshops with internationally accredited teachers (Donald Moyar, Lynne Mynton, Mary-Lou Weprin, Gay White, and Father Joe Pereira), taking formal yoga classes since May of 2004 (a student of Ph. D. Patricia Dewar at Yoga Central), and in April of 2006 began yoga teacher training (500 hours Yoga Alliance certification that is a two and a half year program).

Generally, the philosophies used to guide the original Mindfulness-Based Meditation program guided this study's mindfulness program; however, I have not used a prescriptive style. I continue to question whether or not a prescriptive approach can

facilitate an environment of freedom to explore. As well, the activities from the original mindfulness-based meditation program have been modified because the original program was developed for chronic pain patients to teach self-regulation techniques and not yoga students. Like the original MBM program, I will utilize body scans and Hatha yoga.

Philosophical Statement of Purpose

As I stated in the literature review, the purpose of the mindfulness program is to provide an environment that supports freedom to explore. Buddhism and Krishnamurti recognize that each person must discover mindfulness for oneself (Krishnamurti, 1964; Suzuki, Fromm, & Martino, 1963). However, collaborative discovery into mindfulness by the “teacher” and the “student” may provide the student with insight into mindfulness for later inquiry. Often, mindfulness is synonymously used with the term “insight” meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). So, as a “teacher”, I may be able to show students the unlimited choices of “paths” or “doors”. However, I recognize that I cannot take the student through the door or tell them which door to take. As Krishnamurti (1964) said, my work is finished once the student sees the door.

What kind of exploration will the students partake in?

During each activity, the students explored two questions that I think Krishnamurti has highlighted as ongoing themes of the mindfulness inquiry process. These questions are: What is it like to explore with a mind that says “I know” and what is like to explore with a mind that says “I don’t know, I really don’t know”? Krishnamurti explored these types of questions mainly through discussions; however, he also invited people to explore mindfulness in daily life. Thich Nhat Hanh (1998) has discussed how we can be

mindful during physical activity and he has developed mindfulness movements to help cultivate mindfulness. Kabat-Zinn (1982) also invites people to explore mindfulness during daily activities such as brushing our teeth, walking, and washing the dishes. The students *explored the* mind that says “I know” and “I don’t know” through activities such as discussions, working with animals, journaling, yoga, and listening to guest speakers.

The program provided opportunities to explore with a mind that says “I know” and “I don’t know”, some of the characteristics that Western and Eastern literature have identified as mindfulness. The students explored what are attention, awareness, acceptance, self-compassion, compassion, selflessness, kindness, creativity, non-evaluative or non-judgmental stance, openness, and observation (Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Krishnamurti, 1964 and 1976; Neff, 2003). As well, Krishnamurti has asked - must we not also understand what evaluation is if we are to understand non-evaluation? So, the students explored such things as evaluation, judgment, interpretation, perceptions, wanting, concluding, and expectations. From the description of Kabat-Zinn’s original mindfulness program and from the words of various mindfulness articles and books written by Kabat-Zinn, I did not hear the exploration of such things as evaluation and judgment.